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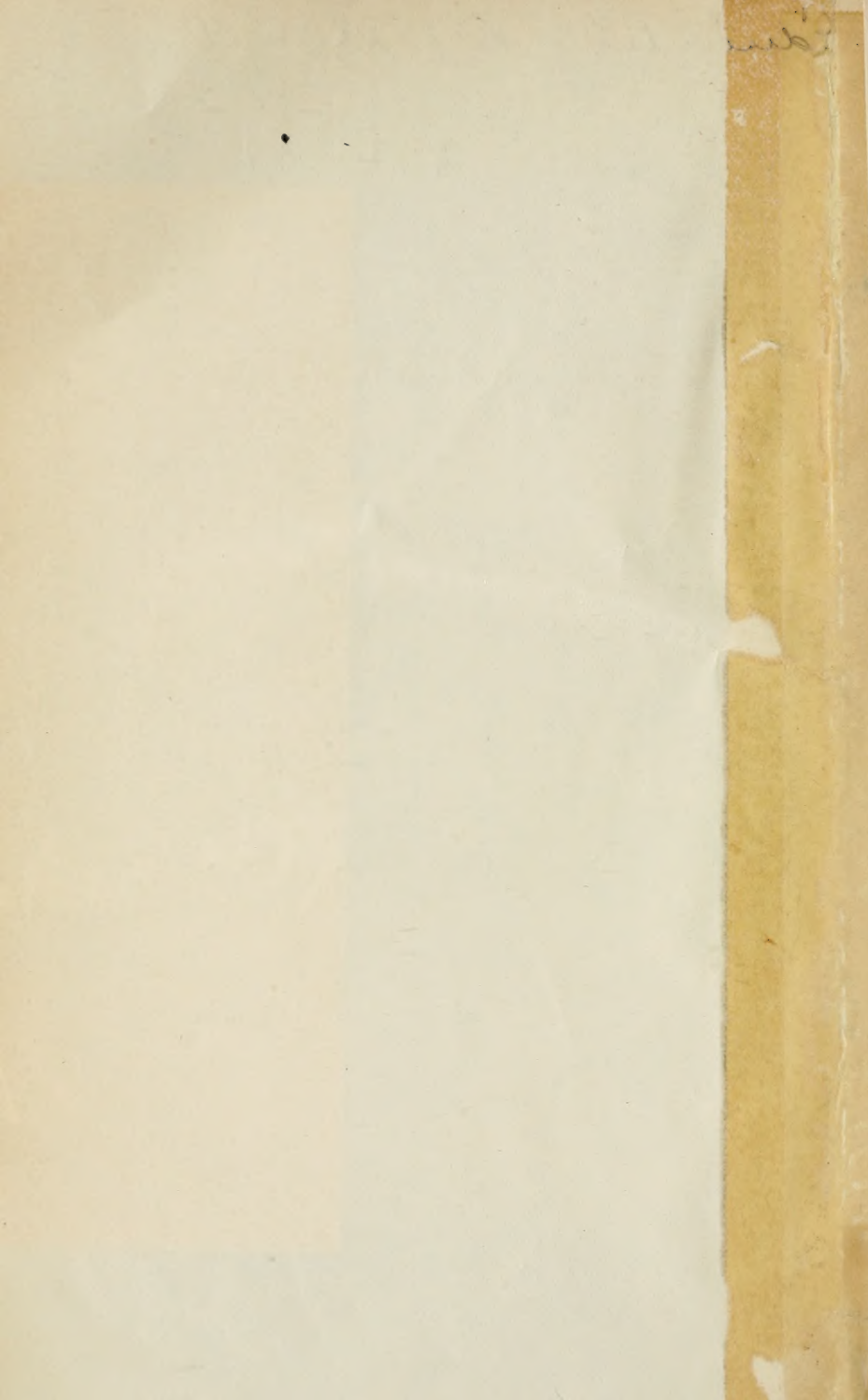


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HISTORY  
OF  
FRENCH LITERATURE

BY  
HENRI VAN LAUN

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HISTORY

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE history of a literature is the history of a people ; if not this, it is worthless. To know merely what books have been written, and who wrote them, is to know a number of dry facts which may encumber the mind, but cannot inform it. To know what our predecessors and our contemporaries have written and thought, to throw ourselves into the mood of an author, assimilate his work, comprehend and develope his meaning, to make a literary production our own, so as to have the power of reproducing it at our pleasure, without at the same time being familiar with the circumstances under which it was first conceived, and the annals of the age in which it saw the light,—this is impossible. A book, in fact, is a part of its author, as he is a part of his generation : and a serviceable knowledge of the one without the other is just as much beyond our reach as it would be to understand a mathematical formula apart from the axioms and definitions upon which it is based. We might as well say that a plant is classified by a description of its colour, form, and texture, as to boast that we had recorded the literature of a nation before connecting it with, and showing its origin from, and dependence upon, that nation's history.

And if a knowledge of history is necessary to a knowledge of literature, it is, as a natural consequence, and still more unquestionably, an assistance thereto. Just as in everyday life we perceive the full meaning of what is said to us when we are familiar with the person who speaks, interpreting in a moment the gestures of his face and body, aided by the

What the  
history of a  
literature  
ought to be.

inflections of his voice, recognising the turns of expression and the idioms which he employs, so in the perusal of a book we are assisted by our acquaintance with the author, having been previously assisted, in forming that acquaintance, by a knowledge of the times which have developed him. How much weaker, for instance, would be the hold which *In Memoriam* has gained upon us, how much of its spirit and of its beauty would have been lost upon us, if we did not independently know what kind of a man the poet Tennyson is—his sensitive, retiring disposition, his abstraction, absorption, repulsion from vulgar and commonplace manifestations of feeling; or if we did not know the circumstances of his connection with Arthur Henry Hallam, the ways and customs of that Cambridge university life to which such frequent reference is made, the tone of the intercourse habitual to young Englishmen in the nineteenth century; or, again, if we were unacquainted with the accustomed manners and grooves of thought in English society, with the aspirations, the phases of science and of faith, the material condition of the country—nay, even with its configuration, its climate, the varied aspects which it has assumed under the hand of God and of man.

This latter thought leads us to a consideration which has more to do with geography than with history; or at least with geography as one description and subdivision of history. But we suppose that it is altogether unnecessary to dwell upon the importance of connecting every author and every literary production with the country in which he or it has been produced. To read the work of a German as we should read the work of an Italian, ignoring the features in each which are attributable to the sky beneath which they were born, and the scenery amidst which their ideas have taken shape, would be to read with closed eyes, and a mind wilfully insensible to one of the greatest allurements of literature.

And this is true not only of works which confessedly depend for their interest upon descriptions of external nature, or in which the conditions of climate and the impressions of physical surroundings are constantly being drawn upon for the purpose of illustration, but also of those more subtle and less manifest phases of the human intellect and imagination, which reveal themselves in manner and in mannerism, in various degrees of sprightliness and of sobriety, in richness or in poverty of thought, but which are none the less a result of the modifying influences of nature.

Now, whilst the literature of a country, and the literary productions of an individual writer, cannot be thoroughly studied and mastered apart from the history of the race and of the epoch, it is very necessary to realise the fact that such a literature, or such a literary production, is, when once created, itself an active organism, having a distinct and independent energy of its own, whereby it forthwith begins to react upon its creators, and to assist in the development of the race and of the epoch from which it sprang. The attributes of the creator are shaped and moulded by the creature; the poem modifies the poet; the history of a people nourishes and educates the people, reproducing itself, as we say, through successive generations with all the added philosophy of experience. Thus, if Guyot de Provins, Marot, Villon, are the genuine products of mediæval France, offshoots of the old Gallic stock, nourished by neo-Latin ideas, brought to perfection amidst the lights and shadows of monkish corruptions, they in their turn became the progenitors of Scarron, Regnier, Béranger, amongst the factors of whose riper and richer minds those earlier satirists must not be neglected. It is not simply that a literary product is, from the moment of its creation, added to the causes of its own existence, but it includes and extends them.

Necessity  
of studying  
the litera-  
ture of a  
country.

The *esprit gaulois* is as potent to-day as it was in the

tenth century ; but whereas it was in Guyot's day a popular sentiment, fostered by the rough intercourse of everyday life, it is in our own age more characteristically a literary inheritance, transmitted from mind to mind by the mediation of poetry and fiction, and refined by this process in its coarser and more offensive features. The *narquois* of yesterday becomes the *moqueur* of to-day ; just as the wild Bretons of the sixth century, the ruthless Normans of the eleventh century, and the *Jacques* of a later date, have been moulded into the political opposition party and the theoretical communists of the times in which we live. The process is much the same in either case ; and the literary annals of the country will furnish its explanation.

What the  
literature  
of a country  
is.

The central idea which we would gladly assume to be impressed upon the mind of the student and of the general reader is this—that the literature of a country is, in a genuine and very important sense, the history of that country, and that it is, at all events, quite as much as the chronological annals of wars and dynasties, of politics and sociological facts, the sum and product of a national energy. History is in fact capable of many subdivisions. We might write the political, social, economical, religious, intellectual history of a country ; but none of them would be complete, even for its own special purposes, without the combination of all. And thus to cut off the intellectual records from the rest, and to call that residuum *history*, as though it could be and was naturally distinct from literature, is a misleading and inconvenient custom, which has but little to be said in its favour. For children, and students of a riper age, it is altogether mischievous ; whilst it is difficult to conceive the circumstances under which a reader could be benefited or assisted by the exclusion of literary annals from the history of any country. Of course it may be both expedient and interesting to make closer acquaintance with some special branch of history, touching more or



less lightly on all the rest. Such, indeed, is our present attitude towards the literary history of France; and the reason for this lies partly in the very defect of previous historical works to which reference has just been made. The literature of France, strange as the fact may appear, has been neglected in England until within the last few years, and it is necessary, therefore, that it should be treated with something more of exclusiveness than if the case had been otherwise.

But, at the same time, no history of literature worthy of the name can afford to pass by in silence the dynastic changes, the national and civil wars, the growth of the constitution, the progress of law, the gradual conquest of personal freedom, the steady amelioration of social habits and institutions, amidst which its own triumphs have been gained, its own monuments erected; to whose formation it largely contributed, after having been itself the outcome and the issue of coincident, not to say identical, causes. What account of French literature would be complete without some reference to the Fronde and to Louis XIV.; without a record of Hugh Capet's struggles against his powerful rivals, or of the quarrel between Pope Boniface VIII. and Philip the Fair; without a mention of the persecution of the Huguenots? And again, the leading facts of sociology are indispensable to any serviceable literary history, the progress of civilisation in its thousand forms, the advancement of art, science, commerce, the development of the ideas of self-government, equity, subordination of ranks, colonisation, and the like, the interdependence of material prosperity and mental culture, the refinements of satire and the vagaries of popular caricature, the history of manners and conventions, of courtly dress and national costumes, of sumptuary laws, and no less imperative fashions—all these in their several relations have an important bearing upon the evolution, as upon the exegesis of a literature, and cannot be overlooked

without the infliction of a distinct and irremediable wrong.

For, let us repeat, the literature is the product of the man, and the man is the product of such surroundings as these. The man is the social unit ; neither he nor his works can be understood unless we understand the social aggregate of which he is a unit. Race, climate, the influences of nature, may have done much to give the original bent to his mind ; but when we have mastered all these, we know but an infinitesimal part of what we need to know. Virgil is not Bavius, Dryden is not Shadwell, Molière is not Boursault. They have been subjected to the same influences of race, and climate, and epoch, and general surroundings, and yet in the end stand at the very antipodes of thought. We must pierce still deeper into the history of their age ; we must discover how it is that the one is a poet whilst the other lacks the divine afflatus. Innate genius cannot be made to account for the whole of this measureless difference ; and it is the work of the biographer and the critic to show how much of it is attributable to the contact of the two men's souls with the circumstances of their day and generation.

Opinions of  
M. Taine.

"This much we can say with confidence," writes an eminent literary Frenchman,<sup>1</sup> "that the unknown creations towards which the current of the centuries conducts us will be raised up and regulated altogether by the three primordial forces of race, epoch, and surroundings ; that if these forces could be measured and computed, one might deduce from them, as from a formula, the specialities of future civilisation , and that if, in spite of the evident crudeness of our notations, and the fundamental inexactness of our measures, we try now to form some idea of our general destiny, it is upon an examination of these forces that we must ground our prophecy. For, in enumerating them, we traverse the complete circle of

<sup>1</sup> H. A. Taine, *History of English Literature*. Introduction, § 5.

the agencies ; and when we have considered race, circumstances, and epochs, which are the internal mainsprings, the external pressure, and the acquired momentum, we have exhausted not only the whole of the actual causes, but also the whole of the possible causes of motion."

True, in the sense of a truism, and true, if by the possibility of divination we simply mean that we could predict the future as soon as we knew the future ; but, in any less general sense, M. Taine's opinion must not lead us into holding too lightly the difficulty of comprehending an author and his works. The passage which we have quoted contains the pith and substance of the distinguished critic's method, and if we follow it too blindly as the formula on which our critical system is to be based, it may possibly betray us into a rather superficial and incomplete estimate of men and things. Of course, in naming the word "circumstance," we include all and everything which can possibly affect the mind ; and equally of course, this all and everything is what we can never hope to know, even of a contemporary writer, even of ourselves. Therefore the efforts which we make to become acquainted with the mainsprings and tributary streams of human thought and action will be successful only in the degree in which they are complete, assiduous, and far-reaching, taking nothing for granted, and nothing for insignificant. M. Taine has done for English literature what no Englishman has done, and he has made contributions to the general history of literature such as hardly any other historian had previously made ; but in two important aspects — and I state this with all due deference and diffidence — he appears to have fallen short of the standard which he has adopted. He has valued too cheaply the paramount influence which the political — perhaps also the social — history of a generation exerts upon an author and his works ; and he has passed too lightly over the immeasurable reflex influ-

ence which literary productions have upon political and social history.

Influence of  
literature  
upon his-  
tory.

These influences are not only vast and mutual ; they to a large extent balance and compensate each other. It is an eternal process in which humanity works out its own development, and progresses according to its own inherent laws. As the physical race is perpetuated by the birth of successive generations—the present springing from the loins of the past, and becoming pregnant with the promise of the future—so the growth of the intellect proceeds by the constant reproduction of vital and vitalising germs. A book is the offspring of the aggregate intellect of humanity, which, issuing mature from its parent mind, becomes thenceforth itself a fertilising agent, and has its part in all future generations. It gives back to the world of thought that which it took therefrom ; appropriating, in so far as it is of any computable value, new ideas and the combinations of old ideas, and restoring them to humanity impregnated with life. It is thus that facts, and the history of facts, are perpetually being wedded to thought ; thus that, from their prolific union, a new generation of facts and thoughts is added to the grand total of human knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Influences  
which pro-  
duce a  
writer.

Of the influences which combine to produce the writer, that of race is fundamental and preliminary. In France it is as strong and as marked as in any other country. The *esprit gaulois*—for perhaps the common term is correctly applied to the leading and predominant characteristics of the French genius—is sharply defined and easily recognised. Its prominent feature is satire—the tendency to catch in the first instance, quickly, and clearly, and comprehensively, the incongruous elements of a composite fact, and to receive them,

<sup>1</sup> “ All the past of time reveals  
A bridal dawn of thunder peals,  
Wherever thought hath wedded fact.”

*Tennyson.*



not as an Englishman might, with a broad grin, but with a gay mocking smile which hides the shock of offended taste under a show of indifference. The show becomes a habit, and it is presently a real indifference which the Frenchman feels as to the conformity of his experience with his natural ideas on the fitness of things. These natural ideas the Gaul possessed in the first instance; and they were strengthened and enlarged, in the very dawn of his literature, by his eager adoption of Latin refinement. The satire is not very cruel; it is, as a late commentator has expressed it, "malice wrapped in bonhommie;" its accompanying shrug of the shoulders disarms resentment, as if the speaker added to his quip some such words as these: "Take my observation for what it may be worth. I give it under reserve; there may be an incongruity in the very words I utter. We cannot escape the common lot; there is incongruity in everything." We cannot be wrong in adopting the description of *gaulois* for this spirit; for though the Gauls, pure and simple, have left no literature behind them, we know that they were the substratum of the composite French, and though Iberians, Romans, Franks, Goths, Normans, have all contributed their elements to the race as it now exists, Gallic blood still runs, perhaps the most copiously, in their veins. Rabelais displayed this mocking characteristic as fully as any of his fellow-countrymen; and, indeed, he typified it in its hardest and sternest aspect; for he hated the corrupt monks, and rebelled against the tyranny and hollowness of a debased religious denomination. That rebellion was another typical feature, which enters largely into the character of Frenchmen. They may have inherited it specially from the Franks and Burgundians; in any case they have been possessed, from an early period of their history, with the passion for social freedom, for the social equality of man. Other characteristics they have, which it would be vain to try and trace to their

source ;—irreverent, sceptical, rash in theory, fiery and impatient rather than persistent in action ; easily susceptible of emotion ; overflowing with animal spirits, self-indulgent, not incapable of, but disinclined to, long endurance, triumphing rather by fitful enthusiasm than by painful adherence to duty, restraint, and obedience. Their reasoning faculties are strong ; they are quick-witted, logical, philosophical ; but, with little perseverance, they are liable to inaccuracy, and make comparatively small use of experience. With such virtues and such failings, they have reaped the most splendid triumphs and have suffered the most provoking defeats. Alternately in the van and in the rear of humanity, they have for their consolation the fact that the brilliancy of their victories outlives the shame of their repulses ; and they have earned the praise which is their proudest boast,—that of being the cynosure of Europe.

Political influences on literature.

The political influences which act in the development and modification of literature are many and potent ; and these, unlike the influence of race, differ more or less in every age. Their effect may, as a rule, be traced with the greatest facility ; and the writers on whom they have left no marked impressions are few indeed. Perhaps the most powerful influence of all is that exerted by the form of government, including here—in the effects of good or bad government, which result in material prosperity or social unhappiness. Frenchmen have, as already implied, been ever peculiarly sensitive before the manifestation of injustice from their rulers ; and unjust rule in France has produced greater popular misery than in any other country in Europe. As a consequence, we find their literature studded over with the traces of this external suffering, and with the marks of a spirit of fiery impatience and revolt. Not to dwell, in this connection, upon the few relics of Celtic poetry, or upon the evidences of sturdy popular rebellion contained in the *Chansons de Geste*, we may instance

the pamphlets of the Ligue, the lofty indignation of D'Aubigné, the sad revelations of the period of the Fronde, the stern denunciations of Rousseau and Mirabeau, the terribly scathing verses of Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, and Barbier, and the reproaches of a score of recent authors whom it is superfluous to name, because the sorrows which inspired their words have hardly passed away from contemporary history. With respect to ideal forms of government, France has instinctively, and with a remarkable degree of constancy, aimed at and advanced towards a condition of self-dominion. It is necessary to be very careful upon this point, for there is much that is conflicting in the history of the country, and many circumstances which might plausibly mislead us. In the fundamental Gallic race it is not probable that the chiefs—and far less that the short-lived dynasties of chiefs—possessed any great despotic strength. We cannot place much reliance on the mention by Zosimus<sup>1</sup> of the Republic of Armorica, though it is probable enough that a virtual confederation of cities did exist in the north-west corner of France at the beginning of the fifth century, for purposes of mutual aid and defence against the Alani, Goths, Huns, and Vandals, who poured across the Rhine when the Roman organisation was no longer strong enough to resist them. But the indomitable assertion of the spirit of independence did no doubt characterise the Gallic race, and had made itself felt in the *bagaudes*,<sup>2</sup> or peasant-risings, which were for a long series of years a thorn in the side of Roman occupation. It is a fair question, moreover, whether the *esprit gaulois*, the tendencies whereof have already been glanced at, was not specially unfavourable to the maintenance of those habits of subordination and obedience which are so necessary to the stability of monarchical institutions. The Latin race, again, had reached

<sup>1</sup> Zosimus, *Isotopia vta*, vi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Celtic *bagad*, a troop or band. There was such a rising in A.D. 270.

the acme of its happiness and glory under a republic ; and its posterity in the south-west of Europe has displayed a constant leaning towards democratic government, in the best sense of the word democracy. The very idea of Caesarism has been defined, by some of its legitimate exponents, as an "imperial democracy ;" and we are justified in referring to the present temper of the French nation in support of the view that if not a majority, at least a large number of Frenchmen are inalienably attached to a democratic form of government, whether the external determination of that form be allowed to pass under the name of Caesarism or Republicanism. In any case the tone of French literature has been largely affected, in earlier times by the perpetual struggle for popular independence, and in more recent times by the direct rivalry between the rule of the people and the rule of monarchs. The annihilation of the aristocracy at the close of the last century was amongst the results of this struggle and this rivalry, and, as one of the most deeply impressed marks of the Revolution, it has stamped itself indelibly upon the literary monuments of the age.<sup>1</sup>

Religious  
influences  
on litera-  
ture.

The religious influence is again an important factor in French literature. France has prided herself from the earliest times upon being the patroness of Christianity—even when she has preferred to call her monarch the "eldest son of the Church." This arrogance does not, of course, extend to the individual champions of the Gospel, who have been as modest in their assumptions as they have been distinguished for their ability and noted for their success.

Ampère has concisely described the contrast thus introduced into French literature.<sup>2</sup> "On the part of the orators and the wits, we have care and cunning of expression ; on the

<sup>1</sup> It is chiefly in the newspapers of that period that this impress is to be found.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire littéraire de la France avant le douzième siècle*, 3 vols., 1839-1840. Preface, p. xiii.



part of the first doctors and Christian writers, interest of matter, convictions, opinions, a cause for which they contend. Hence arises an energetic feature in Christian literature, and a certain hollowness in pagan literature; the latter is elegant and vain, the other more loose, but stronger. On the side of Christianity are all those champions of the faith, who fight for it, who repel the successive attacks of various heresies. Grand is the spectacle of the Church in its infancy, combating, not as it has too often combated, by persecution and violence, but by talent, by eloquence, by reason." Those early combatants have left their mark on French literature,—Irenæus of Lyons, Lactantius of Treves, Ambrosius of Milan, a native of Treves, Sulpicius Severus, Paulinus of Milan, Ausonius, Avitus of Vienne, Sidonius Apollinaris, Salvian, Fortunatus, Gregory of Tours, "the Herodotus of barbarism," Columban (an Irishman), St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany, and born in Devonshire; Charlemagne himself, with his friend Alcuin; and, less eminent, more corrupt in argument, if not in manners, Hinemar of Rheims, and Scotus Erigena, "the last of the Platonists," who tried his best to wed Christianity with the ripest of ancient philosophies. All these were, by birth or adoption, Frenchmen; and though they wrote chiefly in Latin, they have given a tone and colour to the classical literature of France. Unorthodox Christianity has also left its deep impressions, thanks to Pelagius, Celestius, Cassianus, Vincent of Lérins, Hilarius of Arles, who reaped their triumph particularly in Southern Gaul; nor was the independent spirit which they introduced into French theology ever subsequently abandoned, even by such confessors as Bossuet and Bourdaloue, whilst its influence on such minds as that of Pascal, and through them on the modern Christian literature of France, can hardly be overrated. It is with the religious influence as with all other incidental influences; it has acted upon literature by superposition over the fundamental influence



of race, and, consequently, through the characteristics and varied tendencies of race. The habit of satire, for instance, the love of equality, the strain for independence, and the like, have modified theology in France, have secularised religion, and finally, to a large extent, shaken off or depreciated religious forms and fetters ; until at last the negation of religion has become a prominent feature on the face of French literature.

Influence of  
philosophy  
on litera-  
ture.

So, too, of philosophical influences, into which we shall not here pursue the thread of our suggestions, lest we be carried too nearly over the ground already traversed. In philosophy, even more than in religion, we shall find certain race-characteristics of the French exerting a very powerful sway over the writers of their literature. A quick-witted perception of cause and effect, combined with an extreme fertility of the logical faculty, has served to produce not only great triumphs in the field of mental exertion, but also great originality, or even eccentricity, in the conception of novel philosophical systems. Witness Descartes on the one hand, Auguste Comte on the other. This excess of the logical capacity is worthy of special attention, for it explains much in the French intellect which would otherwise appear fortuitous. It is in part, no doubt, the effect of training and acquired habits of thought ; but it is no less certainly a race-characteristic. Compare it with the *finesse* of expression and the rhetorical gift—with the sprightliness of mood and the individuality of criticism—with the independence of manner and the adroitness of *repartie* for which the nation is distinguished, and you will be ready to admit that this logical skill and patience is a characteristic—a composite one, it may be, but still a characteristic of the fundamental tendency of the race. Coupled with the power of passing rapidly to an inference or conclusion, it has enabled the Frenchman to reap brilliant triumphs of oratory and argument, and has made him, in conversation more than in written literature, the most elegant and polished of mankind.

These few considerations may have sufficed to show how largely the literature of France—how largely the literature of every country—has been influenced by external circumstances; near or remote; political, social, or historical. No less striking is the effect which the literary man produces upon the circumstances in which he moves, upon the institutions and the history of his age. Think, for example, of the “Young Germany,” created by Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing; of the “Young Italy” created, in two senses, by Mazzini on the one hand, by Cesare Balbo, d’Azeglio and Gioberti on the other; of the “Young England” created by Byron and nourished by Carlyle. Think of the upheaval of religious thought and life effected in England by John Henry Newman, the elder Froude, and their Oxford contemporaries; of the enthusiasm for humanity stimulated in France by Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset. Instances crowd upon the brain as we write; but there can be no necessity to refer to the thousand schools of thought which have been gathered round the persons of bold thinkers and eloquent exponents of thought in almost every age and country, for poor humanity must always have some one to admire and to follow, or something to criticise. If, in this study of French literature, we were to neglect this active and productive side of literary creators, and fail to gauge the influences of each, as well as the influences upon each, we should forfeit all claims to the satisfaction which conscientious labour can alone afford.

Influence of  
the literary  
man upon  
his times.

If any one should ask why this history of French Literature is undertaken, the reason is a simple one, namely, that no such history, either in extent or in scope, exists in the English language. To a certain point Mr. Hallam, in his *Literature of the Middle Ages*, has dealt philosophically with a subject which he felt and demonstrated to be full of varied interest; but his design precluded him from drawing a complete picture. Demogeot’s valuable work has been trans-

Why this  
history has  
been  
written.

lated into English, at all events in a condensed form ; but he wrote professedly for the mere student, thus sacrificing general discussions and conclusions. Several other handbooks of French literature, such as Gérusez, Gidel, Baron, Albert, Aubertin, Baret, are practically unknown to the English reader, and it may safely be said that no Englishman has yet attempted to do for French literature what the Germans have done for it, and what both Frenchmen and Germans have done for English literature. And the fact appears all the more strange when we consider how much has been lost by the omission.

For the intellectual history of France is certainly unique. It is the history of a race which has ever been in the van of modern European thought, which has conquered more by its mind than by its arms, which has conferred upon the world gifts whose value is not to be calculated by any material standard. It is the history of a nation to which the supremacy of the soul has always been as dear as the supremacy of the sword, and which has more than once asserted that supremacy at the very moment when its military and political influence have been most in dispute. We have to deal with a people essentially spirited and intellectual, whose spirit and intellect have been invariably the wonder and admiration, if not the model and mould, of contemporary human thought, and whose literary triumphs remain to this day amongst the most notable landmarks of universal literature. If we set on one side the master-minds of England, it is to France that we must look for the great lights of modern days, the great pioneers of modern thought, the great leaders of modern intelligence. From France have come the poets whose burning words inflamed the dull hearts of the middle ages, the dramatists who reared the classical stage of the seventeenth century, the mathematicians who opened up to our gaze the marvellous simplicities of astronomical truths, the logicians and metaphysicians who taught the solid mind to

revolve in the orbit of rational faith, the historians who first reduced the chaos of tradition to a science, and emulated, with hereditary genius, the simplicity and concision of Livy and Tacitus. To her, above all, we owe the orderly and logical discrimination of ideas, arrangement of thoughts, clearness and severity of expression, readiness of deduction and elegance of diction, without which a literature can appear at the best but a splendid heap of unknown and unclassified gems.

France is the land of *Chansons de Geste*, of romances culled from the rich fields of mediæval history, and legends bright with the glow of a triumphant Christianity. Her troubadours, her trouvères and *jongleurs*, filled Europe with their songs, and wrote the nursery rhymes of infant civilisations. Spain, Germany, England in particular, owe to her tales and *fables* many of the most beautiful of their earliest poetic utterances. It was France who fertilised the barren cloisters, and reaped from them chronicles and memoirs which still serve as the basis of our modern history. From the French convents came also that religious philosophy which was the first mature offspring of Christian and pagan thought, and which handed down to all time the golden fruit of an Abelard and a Saint Bernard. In France quickened the first germ of religious reformation, nursed by the mocking, seathing, scarifying satire of Rabelais, stimulated by the cold, light, good-tempered banter of Montaigne. France was pre-eminently the cradle of the Renaissance; religion, language, and literature alike revived beneath her cherishing care. The end of the sixteenth and the whole of the seventeenth centuries are crowded with writers of indescribable freshness, vigour, and brilliancy—a brilliancy which has well-nigh eclipsed the sweeter and paler refulgence of Villon and the preceding trouvères. It was the age of the *Pléiade* and of the *Ligue*, of the *Hôtel de Rambouillet* and the *Port-Royal*, of the *Satire Ménippée* and of the *Précieuses*; of poets as varied as Ronsard and du Bartas,

Literature  
in France  
from the  
beginning.



of purists like Malherbe, of romancists like d'Urfé, of euphuists like Voiture. It was the age of historians like de Thou and d'Aubigné, of writers of memoirs like Sully and de La Noue, of theologians like François de Sales, of philosophers like Descartes and Pascal, of philologists and scholars like Joseph Scaliger and Casaubon. It was, once more, the age of human misery and of human glory, of the Fronde and of the *Grand Monarque*, the age of ultra-refinement and of the Academy, where the French language was toned down and purified till it lost much of its pristine energy and vigour, and became fit to be spoken by courtiers and whispered into the ears of high-born dames. And lastly, it was the age of the reviving drama, from Jodelle to Corneille, from Corneille and Racine to the one man who knew well how to bring out upon his canvas the lights and shadows of every-day life, the king of dramatists, the anatomist of humanity, Molière.

Age of  
Louis XIV.

The age of Louis XIV. embraces an Augustan literature of the greatest conceivable splendour, and even this has not been worthily treated in English. The seventy years' reign of this self-sufficient patron of learning and culture succeeded immediately upon the dark days of the Fronde; and in more than one sense he dispersed the ominous shadows which had already begun to creep up from beneath over the fair face of France. The king's motives were selfish, he wanted to be amused, and hence he became a constant friend to men of letters. His court was frequented by men and women to whom the refinements of literature were a boast, and even sometimes a passport. The theatre under Louis XIV. was at the acme of its high repute. The Hôtel de Bourgogne, the Italian comedians, the companies at the Marais and at the Palais Royal, divided the monarch's favours; but Louis, though selfish, was not without discrimination, and he must receive at least the patron's share of credit for several of Molière's inimitable comedies, which, but for him, might never have seen the



light.<sup>1</sup> Amongst the courtiers who were authors appear the Duke de la Rochefoucauld and the Count de Bussy-Rabutin, who paid for his sarcasms by a long exile; amongst the pulpit orators, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Massillon. With these were Boileau, the "lawgiver of Parnassus," the pungent La Bruyère, the refined and literary ladies Mesdames de la Fayette, de Sévigné, and de Maintenon, as well as Racine, then at the height of his fame, the gentle Fénelon, far too liberal-minded for his age, the amiable La Fontaine, the judicious Duke de Saint-Simon; and again, exiles from their native country but still her own children, St. Evremond, Bayle, Le Clerc, Claude, Saurin, and their fellow refugees.

Once more, in the dawn of another and perhaps a still greater renovation of intellect, we meet with a bright roll of names, amongst which the novelist Le Sage, the far-sighted pioneers of political and mental progress, Turgot, Montesquieu, Marmontel, the versatile and courageous Voltaire, the learned encyclopedists d'Alembert, Diderot, and Helvétius, the psychologists and naturalists Condillac and Buffon, the social reformers Rousseau, and de Saint Pierre, stand forth pre-eminent.

The revolutionary epoch in France—by which, of course, is meant the epoch wherein the ever-present though latent desire for human equality in the Gallic race finally broke all bounds, and entered upon that struggle which has succeeded, or must succeed, in establishing the central fixed idea of its genius—was an age of literary as well as of political and social ferment, and the strife issued in the emancipation of letters as of institutions and men. Amidst that chaos of conflict and destruction lived and wrote the eloquent Mirabeau, Maury, Sieyès, Desmoulins; authors who met the full brunt of the Terror, and succumbed to it, like M. A. de Chénier, Saint

Literature  
in France  
during the  
eighteenth  
century.

Literature  
in France  
from the  
Revolution  
to the  
present day.

<sup>1</sup> See the introductory notices to *Don Juan* and *Tartuffe* in my Translation of Molière's Dramatic Works, 1875-1876.

Just, Madame Roland ; men who emerged from it bearing the manifest traces of that long agony, Volney, Necker, Joseph de Maistre. The struggle over, and the short period of natural exhaustion past, after the splendid disgrace of the first Empire, and when for once the intellect of France had perceived that, if she fell back from the van of thought and civilisation, England and Germany were more than able to assume her place, the best and most durable triumphs of the revolution began to be realised, not merely in political freedom, orderly self-government, commercial prosperity, but also in the fields of learning and art. From Madame de Stael, Chateaubriand, P. L. Courier, Benjamin Constant, we pass on through the brilliant age of Louis Philippe to the giants of modern history, the wizards of romance, the pundits of criticism, the novelists, dramatists, philosophers, who restored their country to something like its old supremacy, and ushered in the teeming mental activity of the present day.

Origin of  
the French  
nation.

Such is the literature with which we have to deal ; an undertaking full of interest and responsibility, but which carries with it its own justification. And if we pass from the facts to the causes of those facts, we shall find that the intellectual history of France is the history of a nation which, though Gallic or Celtic in its origin, is a legitimate heir of the ancient Latin race—a race in which Englishmen themselves have an interest of relationship, and in whose transmitted genius we must necessarily feel a hearty sympathy wherever we meet with its traces. France represents in a special degree the development of the Latin civilisation, more fully, if not more directly, than Italy. She was the chosen, if not the natural home, of Roman culture and refinement during the later years of the Empire's decline, even before the transference of the sceptre from Italy to Byzantium had robbed the seat of the Cæsars of its principal allurements. As we shall see hereafter, the last of the Roman emperors set Gaul

in their affections higher than the city which had been the boast and glory of their ancestors, and Gaul herself returned the embrace of her conquerors with all the enthusiasm of fascination. Roman arts, Roman letters, Roman habits and fashions, became the touchstone of the simple Gauls, and of the still more impressionable Franks, who, in their turn, conquered and were absorbed by Gaul.

And yet again, if France has played the part of mistress to Europe, courted in succession by each strong race, yielding to them her beauty and her soul, now by compulsion, now by voluntary self-substitution ; if she has triumphed over all by the glamour of her charms, and tyrannised over all in the fulness of her pride, she has also taken from each in turn the impression of their several excellencies, and has moulded her many-sided heart into a reflex of all who have had commerce with her. Rome was her first love, and stamped its characteristics upon her virgin soul ; but after Rome came the Frank, the Goth, the Iberian, the Norman, the Englishman ; and, loved of many, yet retaining her own individuality, she reflects back upon all her lovers with subtlest flattery their refined and ennobled lineaments. No wonder that Europe looks upon France as the spoiled beauty of the Caucasian family, admiring and loving her even though it may be constrained to be cruel in its love.

There is yet another and more prosaic reason why we should, in this age and generation, address ourselves to the study of French literature. The epoch of the revolution was not favourable to the student and the critic, and we have already seen that between the reigns of Louis XV. and Louis Philippe there occurred a period of comparative dearth, when the turmoil of political strife overclouded for a time the fields of moral and intellectual progress. It was natural that, under these circumstances, the records of French literature should fall into arrears, that men should lose sight of biographical

Reasons for  
studying  
French  
literature

and incidental details which would otherwise have been more carefully preserved, that facts should be overlooked and documents laid aside. It had happened thus to a much greater degree both in France and England during the fifteenth century ; for a protracted period of war is of necessity a period of more or less intellectual darkness. The end of the eighteenth century resembled in some respects the beginning and middle of the fifteenth ; and it is in any case a fact that critics and historians of the First Empire and the Restoration could not at once lay their hands on all the materials necessary to complete the literary history of their predecessors. But during the past half-century many fresh materials have been brought to light, and many forgotten documents are now at our service which have never, in England at least, been categorically arranged for the purpose which they are calculated to serve. Examples of this advance in the value of our knowledge are hardly necessary, but we may instance the new light which has been thrown by recent researches upon the personal history of Molière, and the handful of papers which have served to cast a shadow on the character of Montaigne.

The man  
and the  
book.

From all that has been said, I trust the inference is clear, that the literature of a country is a reflex of that country's history. The history of human society, whether in its political or in its domestic aspects, is, more or less definitely, a succession of biographies and biographical details ; and this is precisely what we discover at the base of all literary movements. The book is the man holding commerce with his fellows ; the man is the exemplar and epitome of his day and generation. From the documents of a past age we can in some sense reconstruct the age, and he will prove himself the most faithful historian who most clearly realises this fact. The mere piecing together of documents, poems, chronicles, and State papers will not suffice for genuine history ; we must perceive behind these the living and breathing men and



women. Moreover, no literature will be found to be more truly the reflex of a nation's history than that which it is our design to study, unless it be the literature of England.

French writers have written with their souls in their work, even when the soul was hollowest and its feelings least genuine. Whatever we may find of mannerism in French literature is but a proof that the words bear the impress of the man who wrote them, and mannerism is a characteristic of French literature. Few Frenchmen could be named whose style would not at once recur to us, with its own specialities of expression, its own excellencies or tricks of language. The reason is that the nation writes as it thinks, straight from the heart, or from the fancy, or from the mood of the hour; and from this straightforwardness it has arisen that its literature is, in a peculiar and remarkable degree, a reflection of its history.

The value of such a literature is manifest. It is lifted by virtue of its speciality above the mere lists of authors and their works, the tables of contents and *dramatis personæ*, the abstracts and excerpts which are often called upon to do service as a "history of literature." It becomes, in fact, rather a literature of history, or better, a history of men and things in their best aspects and from the worthiest point of view.





# HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE.

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## BOOK I.

### ORIGIN OF THE FRENCH NATION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. THE CELTS AND THE IBERIANS.

THE Iberians were the vanguard of the invading races who overwhelmed and swept before them the oldest known inhabitants of Western Europe—the Celts. These latter, in pre-historic times (so far, at least, as France and Spain are concerned), had been driven back before the immigration of the eastern races; but they held their ground in the extreme west, and are to this day represented amongst the European family, by characteristics of race, manners, and even physiognomy. In France their descendants have their principal home in the north-western part of the promontory of Brittany; in Spain they may be recognised to the north-west of a line drawn from Bilbao to the mouth of the Guadalquivir. K. W. von Humboldt has shown, chiefly by considerations of geographical nomenclature, that on the eastern side of this line there remains hardly a single trace of the Celtic tongue; the primeval names of mountains, rivers, and other physical features of the earth's surface being germane to the present Basque language, which has few points in common with any

other existing tongue. And he concurs with other writers worthy of credit in identifying the ancient Iberians with the modern Basques.

The Iberians, at the dawn of their authentic history, occupied the southern part of Spain and France, from the line above mentioned as far east as the mouth of the Arno. No doubt the Aquitanians, whom Strabo<sup>1</sup> represents as differing in language and appearance from the rest of Gaul, belonged to this ancient race, the connection of which with the great Indo-European family is lost in obscurity. They were possibly themselves an indigenous European race, driven back upon the Celts by the invading tribes which so persistently trod upon their heels. A curious etymological coincidence<sup>2</sup> tends to confirm us in this supposition. In the Basque tongue we find the words *atzean*, signifying "behind," and *atzea*, signifying a "foreigner." The Iberian, we may suppose, had made common cause with the Celt, who was in like case with himself, whilst the ever-encroaching Goth and Frank, who pressed upon him in the rear, became generalised as "the people behind him."

It was not, however, in pre-historic times that Brittany, the old Armorica, became the asylum of the Celt. In the time of Julius Cæsar—that is, during the century preceding the Christian era—the Celts occupied that corner of Europe which we now call France, being protected upon the east by the natural boundary of the Alps and the Rhine. The Celtic race is divided into two branches; and of these the Cimbrian branch, or Cymris, were chiefly settled between the Loire and the Seine, in the north-west of the country; whilst the Gallic branch, the Gaels or Gauls, occupied the middle. The leading tribes of the Gallic race are described by Julius Cæsar

<sup>1</sup> The *Geography* of Strabo, ed. Hamilton and Falconer, i. lib. iv. § 1.

<sup>2</sup> K. W. von Humboldt, *Prüfung der Untersuchungen über die Urbewohner Hispaniens, vermittelt der Baskischen Sprache*, p. 129.

under the name of Arvernians, Aeduan, and Sequanians. It was with these that he came into closest contact ; and, taking the name by which they were known amongst themselves, he applies it, in a Latinised form, to the whole country between the Ocean and the Rhine, and calls it *Gallia*. The Gallic league, as Cæsar found it constituted, comprised the whole middle region of Gaul, from the neighbourhood of Quercy (*Cadurei*) in the south to Clermont (*Gergovia*) in the north, and from Besançon (*Vesontio*) on the east to the basin of the lower Garonne. Into this league two powerful tribes on the south-east refused to enter ; the Allobrogians, occupying the western slopes of the Alps, nearly corresponding with Savoy, and the Helvetians, peopling the modern Switzerland. On the north-east were the Belgians — themselves, probably, not the last of the Celtic race who crossed the lower Rhine. Their western boundary — still referring to the date of Julius Cæsar's invasion — ran from the coast a little to the west of Amiens, passed between Clermont and Beauvais (in the district of the Bellovaci), and so through Champagne to the source of the Marne. They formed no strong confederations, being kept, no doubt, in a state of ceaseless disturbance by continual irruptions across their eastern boundary. It was, in fact, not long after the commencement of the Christian era that the western banks of the Rhine, as far, at the farthest point, as the modern Sedan, had acquired the name of Upper and Lower Germany.

Such, in mere outline, was the subdivision of Gaul at the time of the Roman invasion. However, no account is taken of the ancient colonies on the Mediterranean, the offshoots of Greek, Roman, and other eastern civilisations ; of which Marseilles and Narbonne were the most celebrated. Into the historical origin of the early inhabitants of France it would not serve our purpose to enter more deeply ; but it will repay us to inquire into their personal and social characteristics.

The typical Gaul seems to have been of medium height, coming between the taller German and the shorter Roman ; of fair complexion, with ruddy cheeks, blue eyes, and long light-coloured hair. He was spare of form ; his head round, eyes large, nose and chin and forehead rounded off—"a face blunted like a well-worn river pebble ;" beard and whiskers short, or entirely absent. The type is familiar, and may be met with in any hap-hazard assembly of Frenchmen ; but it is still most abundant in Auvergne, in the Cevennes, and in Savoy. The Belgians were larger in the head, taller, with squarer foreheads, more pointed noses, more luxuriant beards. Such is still the description most applicable to the Frenchmen dwelling north of the Seine, and eastwards in the direction of Belgium ; whilst in the south-west, between the Garonne and the Pyrenees, we find to this day a darker, smaller, more sombre, and more enduring race, cognate in appearance as in the blood with the Spaniards of the north.

The Gaul, again, was full of fire and dash ; eager for the battle, but not patient under its hardships ; full of spirit, both in war and in peace—in the war of words as well as of arms. The Gallic race, says Cato, is passionately devoted to these two things : fighting well, and speaking shrewdly. Italians have a byword which speaks of the *furia francese* ; the Frenchman himself has another, when he boasts of his *esprit de finesse*. They are the two principal key-notes of the French character. With all their dash—*élan* is their apt modern word—they have never been permanently strong in the field ; and this because they were lacking in two essentials—enduring and cunning. Dion Cassius<sup>1</sup> accuses them of timidity. Cæsar<sup>2</sup> puts it that "as the temper of the Gauls is impetuous and ready to undertake wars, so their mind is weak and by no means resolute in enduring calamities." And

<sup>1</sup> Lib. xvii. c. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *De Bello Gallico*, lib. iii. c. 19.



again, Strabo<sup>1</sup> says: "The entire race . . . is warlike . . . but otherwise simple . . . thus they are easily vanquished by those who employ stratagem. For any one may exasperate them when, where, and under whatever pretext he pleases; he will always find them ready for danger, with nothing to support them except their violence and daring."

"The value of Frenchmen in battle has often been tested. When we see the Gauls hurling themselves upon the Romans with a blind fury, and the latter awaiting them unmoved, or, by a slight avoidance, letting the sword of the Gaul bury itself in the earth, and then unerringly smiting their enemy, disarmed by his own dash, we think inevitably of the Gaels and their claymores at Culloden, or of the French at Poitiers, at Crécy, at Agincourt, rushing upon the English archers, who, as Froissart says, sat coolly waiting for them, and then rose all together, with thorough unanimity and calmness, and crushed them as the Romans crushed the Gauls."

So writes Ampère, himself a Frenchman, whose accurate and candid estimate of the characteristics of his race it would be difficult to improve upon. The conservation of the old Gallic type is remarkable; but in tracing it down the current of successive ages it will be necessary for us to avoid the many false and conflicting judgments of historians, both ancient and modern, who have been misled, now by ignorance, now by favourable or unfavourable prejudice. The writer just quoted points out two notable inconsistencies in Latin historians, which may serve as examples of the danger arising from the incautious adoption of any single authority, however reputedly trustworthy. Cicero, in his Oration for Fonteius, stigmatises the Gauls as inimical to all religion. He spoke indeed as a special pleader, but he doubtlessly believed, in this instance, what he said; for this is not the only passage in which he levels the same shaft against the Gauls. Caesar,

<sup>1</sup> 1., lib. iv. § 2.

on the other hand, who had had better opportunities of obtaining a knowledge of the country than his eloquent contemporary, says : "The nation of all the Gauls is extremely devoted to superstitious rites."<sup>1</sup> Again, Strabo<sup>2</sup> says that the Gauls were wont to combine in "crowds and vast numbers" for the accomplishment of their designs. Assuming this, and contrasting the acknowledged fondness of the Iberians for isolated fighting—the guerilla warfare of modern Spain—we might suppose ourselves to have arrived at the source of the respective characteristics of the two races as we now know them. But it would be necessary to correct this view by the light of Cæsar's explicit statement, that, not only in the towns, but in every district, almost in every house, there were divisions between opposing parties of men.<sup>3</sup>

The Gauls were rather brave than courageous ; brave, that is, in the sense of being fond of display and of defiance. They braved their enemies with their dashing onslaught and their whirling broadsword ; they braved their friends with gay and splendid garments, with necklaces and bracelets of gold, with the *virgatis sagulis*<sup>4</sup> which answered to the tartans of the Scottish Gaels. The figure of a Gallic chieftain is before us as we write, enlarged by Hucher from ancient coins. His tunic (Lat. *sagum*, Fr. *saie*) falls just below the thighs. It is gathered in at the waist by a cord, ending in two tassels, which were evidently of elaborate make, and apparently ornamented, above the knots, with rings of bronze or gold. Lap-pets fall over the shoulders from behind, and these have a deep edging, doubtless of some richer and gayer material. The helmet is adorned by six rays, three on each side, which, if they were likewise composed of metal, would serve to protect the neck and shoulders from the blows of an enemy's sword. On the throat is a boss of gold or bronze, which must have

<sup>1</sup> *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. c. 16.

<sup>2</sup> I., lib. iv. c. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. c. 2-10.

<sup>4</sup> Ennius, lib. viii. v. 660.

been attached either to a necklet, or to the fastenings of the helmet. In his right hand the chief holds his javelin and ensign—the latter evidently a very elaborate ornament, representing the emblematic wild boar. The left hand rests upon a shield. Such was the gorgeous panoply with which the Gallic warrior went to battle; and his horse was as gaily caparisoned as himself.

Amongst the institutions of the ancient Gauls, we find, of course, those which are common to all races in their infancy; such as slavery, polytheism, contempt for women and children. If we were to confine ourselves to the accounts of Roman historians—which accounts are, in fact, almost all that we have to go by—we should be driven to conclude that the condition of the Gauls in these three respects was quite as bad as, if not worse than that of other uncivilised races. No doubt much that these historians tell us is true. The slave in Rome, according to Roman law, was "*non tam vilis quam nullus*;" and even before the Roman law was adopted in Gaul, the Gallic slave was perhaps equally insignificant. According to Cæsar,<sup>1</sup> he used to be immolated on the tomb of his master, that he might serve him in the other world. There were "but two classes worthy of note," the priest and the warrior; the residuum were slaves; either men of war, following their masters to the battle, and doing their behests in time of peace, or attached to the soil, and sharing in its good or evil fortunes. In religion the Gauls were Druidic; the Druids constituting the governing class, in whose hands were the legislation, the administration, the education, the divination, the general tutelage of the state. They were, moreover, the poets, the seers, the oracles, and interpreters of the mysterious; adding the sanction of superstition to the stern authority of the warrior-chiefs, and feared, in the frequent absence of the latter from home, perhaps still more than when they were

<sup>1</sup> *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. c. 10.

present. It is true that the religion of Druidism was rather pantheistic than polytheistic ; though in Southern Gaul, amongst the Iberians and the Greek and Roman colonists on the Mediterranean, the impure fetishism of Egypt and the refined idolatry of the Aryan race prevailed.

The condition of women and children in Europe during the ages to which we refer was such as to make us hesitate whether we ought to place the Indo-European races in the van of civilisation, or man himself above the brutes. Women were bought and sold, defined by law as disposable property, repudiated at will, hired out by their husbands for gold, prostituted on the very altar of the gods, held to labour like the most degraded of slaves, left to die in their old age, or killed to assuage the displeasure of their brutal owners. In Gaul the tillage of the ground was one of their special duties ; whilst, as for the children, those that were sickly or crippled were rarely allowed to live. There was no sanctity in marriage, save by way of exception ; no homage from the strong to the weak, save by way of appetisation to lust ; no ease and luxury for women in the domestic life, save when a man of wealth set store by his wives and concubines, as amongst the most costly and ornamental of his possessions. In the ancient world there were many temples raised in honour of adultery and prostitution ; not one to the purity of conjugal affection.<sup>1</sup> In brief, the liberty, faith, unselfish love, which are the three central and purifying instincts of modern life, were amongst the ancients all but empty names ; or, more precisely, the names of hideous vices enthroned in virtue's place.

So much being admitted, it remains to be said that the worst part of this corruption came into Europe from the east, and into Gaul from Rome and Greece. The stream of refinement and mental cultivation flowed, no doubt, in the channel which brought the Pelasgians and Etruscans to the

<sup>1</sup> Lavallée, *Histoire des Français*, 19th edition, 1874, vol. i., p. 14.



Mediterranean shores ; but the stream of moral civilisation flowed southwards in Europe, and had its source and tributaries in our own regions of the globe. The barbarians who hurled themselves in successive hordes upon the disciplined armies of Rome, and who ended by overwhelming the mistress of the world, were the real pioneers of human regeneration ; and even in the darkest phases of their history they displayed the germs of their inherent power. It is not to the classical influence alone, though it may be to it in the main, that we must look for the dawn of learning in north-western Europe—for the brilliant effulgence of literary and social culture which we know by the name of the Renaissance, and for the full splendour of mental refinement in which it has been our happy lot to be born. It is, at most, the marriage of the North and the South to which we owe the fertility of modern thought ; and in that marriage the South, with all her rich apparel and dowry of lettered grace, was the bride, whilst the virile intellect and reproductive energy of the North was necessary to bring to birth the stupendous issue of their union. The fact cannot be too strongly insisted upon. It would indeed be absurd to grudge the credit which has been assigned to Greece and Rome for their share in the intellectual fertilisation of the modern world ;<sup>1</sup> but undoubtedly the panegyric bestowed upon them has frequently been excessive, and at times immoderate. The bright dawn of Gallic literature, the galaxy wherein moved the morning stars of French song, owed but little of its brightness to classical ideas ; and the same is true of the literary infancy of the rest

<sup>1</sup> “ Dans ces trois peuples, les Grecs, les Romains, les Hébreux, était l'avenir de l'humanité.”—Lavallée, *Histoire des Français*, vol. i. p. 18. It is impossible not to dissent, *toto orbe*, from this judgment of a shrewd and generally impartial writer, who has in this instance done too little justice to his own Gallic ancestors. As for the influence of the Hebrews on modern thought, we shall not be held to undervalue it when we have occasion to speak of the effect of Christian literature on the literature of France.

of northern Europe. Nor had Greek or Latin learning or imagination—notwithstanding what is generally thought to be the case—made any remarkable impression upon such men as Villon, Marot, and Rabelais, without whom, it is hardly too much to say, French literature is not.

Let us revert to the social characteristics which, as we have admitted, and particularly in respect of three distinct features, leave their blot upon the early history of Gallic society. It is true that the institution of slavery took strong root in Gaul, especially after the Roman infusion. And yet nothing is more certain than that the struggle for equality was always one of the dominant ideas of the Gallic race, which has distinguished it from the very first to the very last page of its history. The Teutonic nations have preferred liberty to equality, and the highest and lowest ranks have, times without number, united to shed their blood in the conquest of political freedom. The Gauls and their descendants, on the other hand, have often consented without a murmur to a condition of political servitude, engrossed in the paramount desire to attain a greater degree of equality between rich and poor. Here was, at all events, a notable redeeming feature, which elevated them, even in their savage days, above the average level of savages. It was manifested in Cæsar's time by a remarkable institution, according to which the soil of the country was redistributed every year, in order, as Cæsar says, that "the common people might be in a contented state of mind when each sees his own means placed on an equality with those of the most powerful."<sup>1</sup> In religion, again, the Gauls could compare favourably with the Aryan and Egyptian races, who had attained a certain degree of civilisation before them. Barbarous as were some of the rites of Druidism, the Druids taught men to worship one God, with a worship which derived its cruelty from the prevailing tone of a warlike age, but

<sup>1</sup> *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. c. 22.

which was not a mere hollow idolatry. Such considerations as these justify us in saying that, although the Teutonic invaders were superior to the Gauls, in their respect for liberty, in their method of worship, and in their care for women and children, the Gauls were in these respects little, if at all, behind the Greek and Latin invaders, from whom they learned such invaluable lessons of civilisation.

## § 2. REMAINS OF CELTIC POETRY.

There were, as has been observed, two distinct races in Gaul previous to the arrival of the Romans—the Iberians of the south-west, in the district known as Aquitaine, and the Celts of the north. These latter were described by Julius Cæsar as Celts and Gauls, between whom he distinguished a difference of speech. The “Celts” of the north-west, perhaps, belonged to the Cymric branch of the family, and were allied more closely than the Gauls with the Cymri of England, Wales, and Ireland. It is impossible in this age to discriminate, in any important sense, between the Gauls proper and the Armorican branch, and no noteworthy error will be incurred by adhering to the commonly-accepted term of “Gauls,” in referring to the inhabitants of the whole northern and eastern country—that is, to the bulk of the nation which we now call French. Even as regards the language of the Celts, it would be difficult to trace, in the modern French tongue, many distinctions between the old Gallic and Cymric. M. Ampère has pointed to a few instances; and he reminds us that, as late as the fifth century, Sulpicius Severus, in his dialogues on the life of St. Martin, makes one of his interlocutors say :—“Speak to us in Celtic or in Gallic, so long as you speak to us of Martin;” which shows that the two forms noted by Julius Cæsar were still

extant. And St. Gregory, in the sixth century, employs the word "fol," *more gallico*, as he explains it.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond this time we find no evidence of a distinctly Celtic speech beyond the borders of Brittany ; where it had been to some extent reinforced in the fourth century by a colony of Welsh, who settled there under the auspices of the usurper Maximus. After them Armorica was called *Petite-Bretagne*, Little Britain.<sup>2</sup> Here, to this day, the Cymric form of Celtic has endured with a certain kind of vitality ; though not to such a remarkable degree as in Wales and in Ireland. Of a Celtic alphabet in Gaul there is no satisfactory trace ; whilst Cæsar<sup>3</sup> informs us that the Gauls made use of Greek characters, a remnant, no doubt, of the Phœnician importations. To the Phœnicians, in fact, whose commercial relations with western Europe, and with Gaul in particular, date from a period at all events anterior to the sixth century before Christ, the country owed not merely its earliest models of Greek civilisation but also many of the characteristics of its religion—many of the distinctive features of Druidism itself. Human immolations had their origin, probably enough, in the instincts of human nature ; but the osier-baskets filled with men and animals, and fired by the hand of the priest, bear a resemblance which can hardly be accidental to the brazen statue of Moloch. The worship not only of Moloch but of Astarte, of Bel (Belenus), of the Tyrian Hercules, found its unmistakable reflection in the religion of Gaul. Gregory of Tours mentions a hill in Auvergne which was known to him under the name of *Mons Belenatensis*. In the Highlands of Scotland and in Ireland, the first of May went at one time by the name *La*

<sup>1</sup> Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. i. prelim. ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See *History of English Poetry* by Warton, ed. by W. Carew Hazlitt, vol. i., p. 95, note 6, in which the probability of a colony of Welsh wandering into Armorica is discussed, as well as the time of their settling there.

<sup>3</sup> *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. c. 14.



*Ecalteine*, and in the Isle of Man a priest was called *Belec*; and it is not impossible that Ampère may be right in tracing to the worship of the Babylonian Bel the common phrase of “being between two fires.” The practice of driving the flock between two fires subsisted until recent times in the wilds of Ireland.

The Druids were themselves divided into three orders; the Ouadd, the Druid proper, and the Bard.<sup>1</sup> The Ouadd was the wielder of the sacrificial knife, and performed the most menial or ordinary duties of Druidic ritual. The Druid proper, who derived his name from the Cymric *derw*, the oak, was the divining priest, the oracle and interpreter, who presided at religious rites, who cut the sacred mistletoe, and was supposed to be in direct communion with Deity. The Bard was the inspired prophet and poet, the bearer of the harp, who sang the sacred mysteries of religion. He was the vehicle of learning, transmitted from generation to generation by means of verses which he had caught from the lips of his predecessors, and which he instilled into the minds of his pupils. He was at once the poet, the historian, and the teacher of his race; and to him the warrior chiefs looked to inflame the passions of the people on the eve of war. The Druidic poetry was never committed to writing, and hardly a trace of it—at all events of the ancient Gallie poetry—survives. Lucan, indeed, a Spaniard by birth, has a passage in his poem *Pharsalia*, the scene of which is partly laid in Gaul, which is in all probability inspired—to say the least of it—by the same thoughts which inspired the ancient bards. The passage is as follows:—

“There was a grove, never violated during long ages, which with its knitted branches shut in the darkened air and the cold shade, the rays of the sun being far removed. This no rustic Pans, and Fauns, and Nymphs, all-powerful in the groves,

<sup>1</sup> Toland, *History of the Druids*, ed. Huddleston, 1814, second letter

possessed, but sacred rites of the gods, barbarous in their ceremonial, and elevations crowned with ruthless altars, and every tree was stained with human gore. If at all, antiquity, struck with awe at the gods of heaven, has been deserving of belief; upon these branches, too, the birds of the air flew to perch, and the wild beasts to lie in the caves; nor does any wind blow upon those groves, and lightnings hurled from the dense clouds; a shuddering in themselves prevails among the trees that spread forth their branches to no breezes. Besides, from black springs plenteous water falls, and the saddened images of the gods are devoid of art, and stand unsightly, formed from hewn trunks. The very mouldiness and paleness of the rotting wood now renders people stricken with awe; not thus do they dread the deities consecrated with ordinary forms; so much does it add to the terror not to know what gods they are in dread of. Fame, too, reported that full oft the hollow caverns roared amid the earthquake, and that yews that had fallen rose again, and that flames shone from a grove that did not burn, and that serpents embracing the oaks entwined around them. The people throng that place with no approaching worship, but have left it to the Gods. When Phœbus is in the mid sky, or dark night possesses the heavens, the priest himself dreads the approach, and is afraid to meet with the guardian of the grove.”<sup>1</sup>

The sacred forests of the Druids unquestionably live in modern literature, reappearing under the name of enchanted forests in the *fabliaux* and legends of later days. Such was the forest of Brockeliand, in Brittany, with its dark lake, whereof the surface being disturbed, a storm forthwith arose, and wonderful events took place; which sceptical Wace explored in the twelfth century, and, finding nothing, wrote:—

“Merveilles quis mais ne trouvai,  
Fol m'en revins, fol y allai.”

The Druidic bards were, in one phase, when they showed themselves sufficiently degraded to become the parasites of a powerful chief, forerunners of the most mercenary *jongleurs*

<sup>1</sup> *Pharsalia*, ed. Riley, bk. 3, v. 398

and troubadours of ten centuries later. Poseidonius, a contemporary of Cæsar, relates a story of Luern, the most powerful "King" amongst the Arvernians. One day, when he had given a great feast, a certain bard, who had been delayed in his arrival, found Luern on the point of departure; and not willing to lose his opportunity, he ran beside the king's chariot, and sang some impromptu verses, in which he extolled Luern and lamented his own delay. Luern took a purse of gold from one of his attendants and flung it to the bard; who, having picked it up, renewed his song in these words:—"The earth over which thy chariot-wheels pass instantly brings forth gold and precious gifts to enrich mankind."<sup>1</sup>

To the Druidic bards succeed the natural inheritors of their poetic gifts, the lay musicians who, in the six or seven centuries after Christ, hung upon the trains of mighty monarchs, or shared, in the mountain passes of western Europe, the straitened liberty of the unconquered Celts. In Brittany, however, we search for them in vain; but they made their home for many generations in Wales and Scotland. Of these the most celebrated were Taliessin and Merlin, whom a deathless tradition has preserved from generation to generation in loving memory. They are described as Christians and warriors; Christians who despised the monks, and warriors who did not love bloodshed for its own sake. In an early legend Taliessin is represented as saying contemptuously of the monks, "They know not the signs of the dawn; they cannot tell the path of the wind." And Merlin: "I will not receive the sacraments from these hateful black-clad monks; God Himself shall give me His sacraments."<sup>2</sup> If such was the language of Arthur's bard, no

<sup>1</sup> This story is differently related in Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. p. 135, note 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. i. prelin. ch. iii. 56.

wonder Merlin has been stigmatised to all ages as a sorcerer. And however apocryphal may be all that we know of the utterances of Merlin, the Arthurian legends bear out the notion that the Christianity of the ancient Britons, and of their bards in particular, was but slightly sympathetic with the spirit of sacerdotalism.

The bardic poetry of Britain was doubtless of much the same character with the bardic poetry of Brittany; but, unfortunately, the latter has been lost in obscurity. There is indeed the tradition of a Breton bard of the fifth or sixth century, known by the name of Guinklan; and it is possible that even yet some relics of his songs may be brought to light. But the evidences of a national Gallic poetry in the first seven or eight centuries of the Christian era are extremely slight. Marie de France, a *trouvère* of the twelfth century, speaks of certain *lais bretons*,<sup>1</sup> from which she professes to have taken the subjects of several of her *fabliaux*. But only one of these *fabliaux* deals with the traditions of the Round Table. The themes of the rest are such as might be indigenous in any part of France; and thus, even if Mary learned them in Brittany, they may, as probably as not, have passed thither from Normandy. Nevertheless, the Arthurian legends are found current in France at the very dawn of her Middle-Age literature, and form the staple of her chivalric poetry; which adds a confirmation to the belief that the subjects, the spirit, and the manner of the post-Druidic bards were all but identical in Britain and in Gaul.<sup>2</sup>

### § 3. REMAINS OF IBERIAN POETRY.

Amongst the traces which the ancient Iberians have left behind them in Aquitaine, Languedoc, and Provence, we may

<sup>1</sup> See Warton's *History of English Poetry*, ed. Hazlitt, vol. i., pp. 93-95, and p. 163, on the *Lais of Marie de France*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 106, note 3.



mention certain names of places ; whereof Calagorris, in Aquitaine (now Cazères in the department of the Ariège), is an example, and which is clearly identical with Calahorra, in the north-east of Spain. Now the Basques of Spain and the Gascons of France are both representatives of the old Vascones, a later appellation of the Iberians ; and Calahorra is but the Basque form of the Gascon Calagorris, the name being given to two towns, one on either side of the Pyrenees, by the same Iberian race. A French historian has enumerated nineteen names of localities in Southern Gaul which are repeated in slightly different forms in the north of Spain. Nomenclature is, however, one of the least important aspects in which the opposite slopes of the Pyrenees declare to this day the common origin of their original inhabitants. The most distinctive feature, and the one which most assists our present investigations, is the similarity of personal characteristics, habits, and bent of thought between the two branches of the same race ; a similarity which displays itself through successive ages of history, which can be traced in every epoch of literature, and the remembrance of which will guide us to right conclusions where we might otherwise readily go astray. The Iberian character, as already observed, was especially lively, unconstrained, off-hand, independent, even eccentric. The Gascon spirit is proverbial in more senses than one ; *gasconnade* being neither its best nor its worst element. "It has often been remarked," says M. Ampère, "that in reading the history of France one is astonished at the number of men of naturally easy manners, full of coolness and freedom, who have in every age turned up from the banks of the Garonne. To confine ourselves to literary history, observe the liveliness, the freshness, the readiness which distinguishes the character of many Gascon authors. Do they not all seem to write without premeditation ? Look at Montaigne, Brantôme, d'Aubigné ; has not Montesquieu himself, with his great and serious qualities,

a certain agility and speed in his temper which seem to be at one with the sprightly and tripping attractiveness of his compatriots?"

The Iberian language was synthetical in the extreme, resembling in the multiplicity of its inflexions no European language so much as that of the Lapps, and none more than those of the Indian tribes of North America. In this respect it can have had but slight influence upon the Gallic tongue, and even less upon the amalgamated speech which we now call French. The tendency of grammatical laws was against it; the natural selection which has exhibited itself in language as much as in anything else, favoured, as we know, the Teutonic syntax, the Indo-European vocabulary. Nevertheless, the Gascon vocabulary has made some contributions to the modern French, of which only a very small proportion can be problematically traced back to their origin.<sup>1</sup> In the matter of alphabets the Iberians were superior to the Gauls; for they used more than one. That which has been most fully deciphered comes tolerably near to the Greek alphabet of sixteen characters, and was perhaps introduced by the Phœnicians.

Of the literature of the ancient Iberians, history says very little; but that little is suggestive. According to Strabo,<sup>2</sup> the Turditans, the most cultivated tribe of the Iberians, "understand the use of letters, and possess monuments inscribed with ancient records, poems, and laws in verse, reputed to be six thousand years old. The other Iberians have different alphabets and different tongues." And he

<sup>1</sup> Amongst them are such words as *ennui* (Basque *enojua*, fatigue, discontent); *aisé* (B. *aisia*, rest); *vague* (B. *bagà*, a wave). Larramendi, *Della Perfeccion de al Bascuence*, p. xxi. All these etymologies seem erroneous, or very doubtful. Compare also Diez, *Etymological Dictionary of the Romance Languages*, ed. by Donkin, which gives a different etymology of the above-mentioned words. Wedgwood, in his *Dictionary of English Etymology*, agrees in the main with Diez.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. 3, c. i.

speaks elsewhere of their culture and civilisation. The records of this early poetry are lost to us ; but there exists in the Basque language a curious fragment relating to a stand made against the Romans in the time of Augustus, in the Biscayan mountains. The poem is doubtless of a later date than the battle, but it bears manifest signs of the rudeness of its original form, and the looseness of its transmission from age to age. Its language may have become modified in the process, but it probably represents fairly enough the spirit and the ideas of a very early age.

The bare facts of this obstinate resistance to Roman aggression seem to have been as follows : The Roman general, unable to force his way through the enemy's position, determined to reduce him by siege, hoping to gain by famine what he could not gain by force. It is said that the siege endured for several years, and was terminated at last by a pact honourable to both parties. Thus runs the poem in question :—

“ The strangers from Rome wished to take Biscay by force ;  
and Biscay raised the song of war.

Octavian (is) the lord of the earth ; Lecobidi of the Biscayans.

From the ocean, from the land ; Octavian besieges us.

The parched plains are theirs ; (ours are) the woods of  
the mountains, and the caves.

Favourably were we placed ; each (of us) firm in his courage.

Light (is our) fear when our arms meet ; (but) O our vessel  
of bread thou (art) ill-stored.

If they wear strong armour ; the undefended bodies  
(are) active.

For five years, day and night ; without any rest the siege  
endures.

When they slay one of us ; fifteen of them (are) destroyed.

They being many, and we a little band ; in the end we  
make peace.

## § 4. INFLUENCE OF GREECE ON GAUL.

The most remote influences of Greek civilisation on Gaul were probably those which came in the train of Phœnician commerce. With the earliest Phœnicians there appear to have come a number of Rhodian settlers, who christened the Rhone (Rhodanus) after their native island, and built a town on its banks which bore the name of Rhodamisia. Of the Phœnician influence something has already been said; and it remains to be seen in what manner the Greeks themselves, contemporaries of the Phœnician merchants, who, either independently of, or in conjunction with them, settled from time to time on the Gallic sea-board, availed themselves of this new outlet of their genius. Herodotus does not mention Marseilles, though the colony was founded about a century before his time; and it is significant of the scantiness of geographical knowledge amongst the Greeks in those days that the "father of history" makes the Danube rise in the Pyrenees. Even Diodorus Siculus, writing after Julius Cæsar, speaks of the rivers of Gaul as being covered with ice.

Strabo has preserved a fragment of Aeschylus, in which Prometheus tells Hercules how he came to the land of the Ligurians, and, being attacked by them, and having emptied his quiver, Jupiter sent him a cloud of stones. The allusion seems, from Strabo's context, to be to the plain of La Crau, on the left bank of the Rhone, which is covered with alluvial boulders for several miles in extent. And thus it happens that the country which, out of all Europe, was destined to receive the most notable impressions from Greek literature was itself the first to contribute to that literature, in however indirect a manner, a similitude for one of its grandest poets.

The date of the foundation of Marseilles is about 600 B.C.



Massalia was built by Phocæan colonists from Asia Minor; and in the time of Cæsar (who took it by storm in his Pompeian wars) it was at once the most prosperous and the most civilised town in Gaul. According to Strabo there was not a single man of leisure in Massalia who did not devote himself to rhetoric or philosophy. The whole southern coast of Gaul, from Spain to Italy, was strung with Greek towns—Narbo (Narbonne), Agathè Krenè (Agde), Olbia (Hyères), Antipolis (Antibes), with the islands of the Stechades, opposite to Massalia. Inland also the culture of the colonists extended, the most notable offshoot being at Thelinè, the modern Arles. The constitution of Massalia, and probably of the other Greek settlements, was originally Doric, with an aristocracy as its distinctive feature; and the “patrician severity” which Tacitus so greatly admires may have had something to do with the radical convictions of the Marseilles of to-day. Their most honoured divinity was the Doric Apollo, and after him Ephesian Diana. Phocæa had itself been founded, on the Asian coast, by emigrants from Phocis and Ionia; and the Phocæans had imported into Gaul the Diana whose central shrine was at Ephesus—the Ionian goddess of Asia, type of material beauty and unfettered natural life; not the chaste Doric Diana as worshipped by the Greeks at home.

Commerce was perhaps the most important vehicle of early Greek civilisation, and it was by commerce, without doubt, that Gallic civilisation learned to make her first strides in advance. The lower Rhone was, from the earliest historic period, a busy artery of commerce, as was the Loire on the west, with the thriving town of Corbilo at its mouth. Not only from historical records, such as the writings of Polybius,<sup>1</sup> but also from coins and inscriptions, we learn that Greek civilisation in various forms, religion, political institutions,

<sup>1</sup> Lib. 3.



commerce, the Greek alphabet, and to a certain extent the Greek language, existed in Gaul before the incursions of the Romans became frequent.<sup>1</sup>

Greek art followed in the train of Greek commerce and Greek institutions. Zenodorus of Clermont is mentioned by Pliny as an able sculptor. His statue of Mercury earned him such fame that he was sent for to Rome in order to execute a statue of Nero. On the other hand, Greek sculptors worked upon the bas-reliefs of Gallic monuments. Silver vases and statues, ornaments for the house and for the person, have been discovered as far north as Bernay in Normandy and Bavay in Flanders, which, though they may have been Gallic in conception, must certainly have been executed by the hands of Greeks.

The general persistence of the Greek colonists in the language, institutions, and ideas of their ancestral race has been remarked upon by many writers, and it was as striking a feature in Gaul as elsewhere. More than this, some have gone so far as to assert that they made their influence felt upon the surrounding race, even to the extent of impressing upon the national literature of their adopted home the stamp of their native country. The fact that it has been so, more or less indirectly, with the pastoral vein of Greek poetry, which has been in different ages imitated by the Latins, the French, and the English, requires no illustration. The troubadours in particular, as we shall hereafter see, affected the graceful thought and style of Theocritus; and their work may be described rather as rivalling than as merely imitating the Greek model. M. Fauriel<sup>2</sup> pushes the observation still further,

<sup>1</sup> At Avignon an inscription has been found wherein occur such forms as *Κουτος* (quintus), *Ερεννιος σεκουνδος*, *Ερεννιω πρεσεντι* (Frennio præsentī), which show that, even after the Roman invasion, Greek characters continued to be used. At Emporiæ, a town which must have been originally Iberian, then Greek by colonisation, then Roman by conquest, coins have been found bearing legends in a medley of Iberian, Greek, and Latin characters.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de la Poésie provençale*, vol. i. pp. 83-130; vol. ii. pp. 96-98.

maintaining that the *aubades* and the *sérénades*, a *genre* which we might think so essentially French in its flavour, are but themes upon a note cherished through many ages of recollection from the Greek songs of dawn. The Greeks must not claim all that is exquisite and delicate in art, and we venture to challenge the correctness of M. Fauriel's surmise. Another conjecture is that certain early chivalric poems in France had their origin in Greek reminiscences—the adventures of the Provençal nobleman Raymond, for instance, in the legend of Ulysses. Raymond Dubousquet was three days tossed upon the sea; he returned after many wanderings to his Provençal home, hiding in the hut of a peasant. His castle and his wife had been appropriated by an importunate suitor, and, finally, he is recognised while in the bath by the scar of an old wound. The resemblance here to the story of Ulysses is not to be mistaken; and, as M. Ampère points out, it is not by the mediation of the schools that this coincidence is to be explained, but only on the supposition that the *Odyssey* was transmitted from the immigrant Phœceans to their descendants, and from them to the French bards.

The Greek tongue was spoken in southern Gaul certainly for six centuries after Christ, and probably for one or two more. When, in the fifth century, Nestorius wrote to Celestine I., Bishop of Rome, a letter in Greek, the latter had to send for a Marseilles scholar to translate it. A hundred years later the Bishop of Arles, having introduced a new psalmody from the east, directed that the priests and the people should sing alternate verses; and this, we are told, was done, sometimes in Latin, sometimes in Greek—the latter being introduced clearly on account of the number of people who understood that language without understanding Latin. Of Greek roots in the Provençal dialect there are even now said to be a certain number, whilst in the Middle Ages they were still

more abundant.<sup>1</sup> It would, of course, be unsafe to draw our illustrations on this point too freely from modern French, although there are instances in which the introduction of a Greek root, or perhaps an idiomatic Greek phrase, may be referred to the period of which we have been speaking ; and if this be true of the French language, it is undoubtedly true, in a much wider sense, of the Greek spirit.

Throughout the successive phases through which we pursue the course of French Literature, we will attempt to make it conspicuously manifest that the mantle of classical culture and intellectual refinement has fallen—not exclusively, but in a marked and special manner—upon the shoulders of France. Form, style, beauty, arrangement, precision,—these have been pre-eminently the virtues at which French authors have aimed, from the dawn to the noonday of their literature. The observance of classical rules and the attainment of classical standards have been the end which they sought, and the crown of their highest efforts ; until that which began by being a purely imitative and diffident process became what it now is—the spontaneous and unfettered exercise of classical taste. In England, also, there was a classical age, the results whereof upon the national style have been permanent (let us hope) and stable ; but, as it was not steadily aimed at and cultivated, as in France, so it was less brilliant in its advent, and less effectual in its influence. Moreover, we were in this

<sup>1</sup> In early Provençal literature we find some which are now obsolete, such as *pelech*, the sea ; *styl*, a column ; *idria*, a vase for water, and the like. Amongst modern Provençal words possibly of early Greek origin one of the most striking is *artoun*, bread, which is extant in the neighbourhood of Marseilles. See for the Greek elements in the Romance dialects, F. Diez, *Introduction to the Grammar of the Romance Languages*, who, however, in his Grammar, states that *artoun* is not from the Greek *ἄπρος*, but probably from the Basque *artoa*, maize-bread, which Humboldt says meant originally acorn-bread, from *artea*, a sort of oak. Brachet, in his *Etymological French Dictionary*, says, "The Greek language has scarcely given anything to the French since the time of its popular formation."

respect a hundred years behind our neighbours—behind them by at least the interval which elapsed between Racine and Addison, or between the youth of Massillon and the old age of Johnson.

History and tradition are all but silent as regards the written literature of Massalia, and of the Greeks generally in Gaul. But it would be unjust to omit all mention of Pytheas in a work on French literature. About four centuries before Christ Massalia despatched two travellers—precursors of all African and Arctic expeditions;—Euthymenes to Senegal, and Pytheas towards the frozen ocean. The latter brought back strange tales of what he had discovered, and he has been amply laughed at for his pains—by Strabo, by Polybius, by Bayle, and others. Undoubtedly Pytheas may have been an insatiable devourer of fables, even if he did not embroider his facts. So also was Herodotus, and travellers of a much later day than that of Mandeville. One fable of this same Pytheas, related by Apollonius of Rhodes—to the effect that a piece of unwrought iron, left overnight on Vulcan's islands of Lipara and Strongyle, whilst at the same time the supposed value of the labour was deposited, would be found next day worked into a sword or a spearhead—has at least had the credit of inspiring many a legend in succeeding ages. Witness the Valley of the White Horse in *Kenilworth*, and the legend of the vale of Berkshire, which, the missing links supplied, would probably find their origin in the fertile brain of the Massalian.

### § 5. INFLUENCE OF ROME IN GAUL.

After Greece Rome ; in the annals of their national glory, in their entry into Gaul, in the order of their influence upon the mind of France, in the degree of authority exerted by their respective civilisations. Greece, the commercial nation,



had charmed and penetrated her hosts by her poetry, her rhetoric, her arts ; Rome, the military nation, remodelled her victims by her laws, her administration, her moral vigour.<sup>1</sup>

Something has already been said of the work of Cæsar in Gaul. He had so far subjugated the country that there was, at the time of his death, no longer an army that dare face him in the field. But he left much for his successors to do. Cicero, speaking of the consular provinces,<sup>2</sup> said: "Great nations have been conquered by Cæsar, but they have not yet been bound down by laws, by an undisputed system of justice,<sup>3</sup> by a solid peace." The work was undertaken by Augustus and those who wore the purple after him ; and they set themselves steadily to Romanise the Gallic nationality. Anything like national spirit and patriotism was henceforth a heinous crime, crushed out as soon as it showed itself. They established municipalities, and distributed Roman officials throughout the country, almost entirely irrespective of national needs and traditions. They put back the boundary of Aquitaine from the Garonne to the Loire, thus confounding Iberians and Celts under the superimposed name of Romans. They made Lyons, then an unimportant place, the political centre of the country. In some instances the names of places were capriciously altered. Thus Bibracte became Augusto-dunum (Autun) ; and later still it reappears as Flavia. Claudius, himself a Gaul by birth, continued the work of denationalisation. It is true that his methods were more statesmanlike. Cæsar had admitted the Narbonensians to the Roman Senate ; Claudius extended the privilege, and, but for his premature death, would have still further conciliated the people. Vespasian, again, displayed discrimination in his Gallic policy. About a hundred years after the death of Julius Cæsar the Gauls

<sup>1</sup> See Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. i. prelim. ch. 6, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *De Provinciis Consularibus*.

<sup>3</sup> *Certo jure*.

made several attempts to regain their independence. Sacrovir, an Aeduan, unable to incite his fellow-countrymen to war, had stabbed and burnt himself in his house at Autun. Sabinus not only took up arms, but aspired to the Roman purple ; and he suffered under Vespasian the natural reward of his temerity. Claudius Civilis followed ; but as his ambition had not gone beyond the liberation of the Batavi, the emperor pardoned him (A.D. 70). In the second century history is all but silent concerning Gaul. It was the age of the Antonines, and the world had comparative rest. Then the demoralisation of the Empire fairly set in, and Gaul shared the fate of Rome's other dependencies, and of Rome herself. The legionaries preyed upon the countries in which they were settled ; the generals quarrelled, and even fought out their private grievances in the face of the subjugated people ; Severus himself sacked the city of Lyons on the most flimsy pretext. Gaul, too, became demoralised with her masters, and no determined effort was made to cast off their yoke.

It was in letters as in society and politics ; the intellectual existence of Gaul, as well as her physical existence, was to be inextricably interwoven with that of her Roman conquerors. Gaul's destiny was to follow the principal phases of contemporary Latin literature ; and she began forthwith to play her part. Hence arises one of the most remarkable features of her early literary history ; the great number of Gallie orators, or rather rhetoricians and grammarians,<sup>1</sup> who spoke and wrote in the Latin tongue. Amongst the Gallo-Romans who thus adorned the land of their birth before the prevalence of Christianity, we may name<sup>2</sup> Valerius Cato, Roscius, Varro Atacinus, Cornelius Gallus (immortalised by a dedication of

<sup>1</sup> By the word *grammarian* the Alexandrians understood very much what we describe as "a man of letters."

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius (*De Illustribus Grammaticis*) mentions Octavius Teneer, Sisecennius Jacchus, Oppius Cares.

Virgil),<sup>1</sup> Trogus Pompeius, Marcus Aper, Domitius Afer, and Petronius, who, as has been pungently observed,<sup>2</sup> “kneaded into statues of exquisite workmanship the Roman filth.”

### § 6. INFLUENCE OF GERMANY ON GAUL.

Towards the close of the third century another enemy fastened itself upon the doomed country. The Franks crossed the Rhine, and, uniting with their brethren upon the left bank, in the district which had already come to be known as Upper and Lower Germany, overran Gaul, and even Spain. The theatre of events was from this time<sup>3</sup> gradually transferred from the south to the north ; or at least it was in the north that the Franks met with the most obstinate resistance and settled themselves most firmly. It was in the north also that the Emperor Julian<sup>4</sup> made Parisii Lutetiorum the seat of imperial government. The Germans, however, can hardly be said to have established themselves in Roman Gaul, to any large extent, before the beginning of the fifth century. Meanwhile the country became more and more demoralised under the corrupt tyranny of Rome. Speaking of the age of Diocletian, Constantine, and their successors, a French historian says :<sup>5</sup> “The reign of the legions ends ; the power of the palace domestic begins.” From palace domestics spring dukes and counts ; from besotted and weak-minded emperors a foolish aristocracy. From the two together were generated the wars of the Bagaudes, antetype of the Jacquerie, which endured with greater or less vigour for some two centuries, and in one of which Augusto-dunum, with her Latin schools, was destroyed. In fact, Gaul was at this period, in the worst sense of the word, enslaved. From this depth Christianity

<sup>1</sup> Virgil dedicated his Tenth Eclogue to him.

<sup>2</sup> Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. i. ch. i. p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> 284.

<sup>4</sup> 357.

<sup>5</sup> M. Lavallée, *Histoire des Français*.

was to raise her ; and it was under a Christian standard that Constantine led an army of Gauls to triumph over his enemies at Rome.<sup>1</sup>

Of the Teutonic invaders who now overran the country, the Visigoths occupied Southern Gaul and Spain, overlapping the Iberian race ; the Ostrogoths settled in Northern Italy ; the Vandals, including Burgundians and Longobards, halted, on their way to Spain, in Eastern Gaul and Italy ; the Franks, including the Salians from the Ysel and the Ripuarians from the Rhine, formed the bulk of the newcomers, and spread over the whole of Northern Gaul.

On a winter's day, the last of the year 406, a vast host of Goths, Vandals, Huns, and Allemans crossed the Rhine on the ice, and, pushing westward, gained their first great victory at Moguntiacum (Mainz), where they slaughtered hundreds of citizens in the cathedral. They traversed the country without any notable check, and penetrated even to the extreme south-west. The Bagaudes rose again and added to the chaos of slaughter. In 412 came the Visigoths under Ataulf, who, two years afterwards, married Placidia, sister of the Emperor Honorius. The Burgundians seized a new home between the Rhone and the Jura, where the brave Sequanians had once dwelt. They were Christians, and perhaps of all the Teutons the most peaceable, if they met with no opposition. Orosius says that they treated the Gallo-Romans like brothers. In 419 Honorius, who has the credit of being the first voluntarily to alienate the soil of France, ceded to the Visigoths the district cut off by a line running from the mouth of the Loire to a point a little eastward of Narbonne, including such important towns as Santones (Saintes), Burdigalia (Bordeaux), Pictavi (Poitiers), and Tolosa (Toulouse). The Visigoth, like the Burgundian, was disposed to be amicable with his neighbours. He took half of the forests, two-thirds of the culti-



vated lands, and one-third of the slaves—very approximately, no doubt, in the proportion in which he felt himself fitted to manage his new possessions. The Gallo-Romans displayed a certain characteristic politeness and equanimity on the occasion. They styled themselves “hosts,” and the forcible settlement “hospitality.” So both sides took matters philosophically, and amalgamation began forthwith.

A generation passed, and then barbarism in its worst form launched itself against western civilisation. Attila—whom under the name of Etzel we meet with in the *Nibelungen Lied*—bore down on Gaul,<sup>1</sup> at the head of vast hordes of Teutons, Slaves, and even Tartars, and pushed his conquest as far as Aureliacum (Orléans). There he was encountered by Theodosius, the king of the Visigoths, with his son Torismund, and Aetius, a Roman general. Etzel fell back to Campi Catalaunici (Châlons), and there the invaders were routed, though the king did not live to be hailed the conqueror. And so Europe was saved from Tartar rule. But Rome was past saving. Aetius, who in happier times might have been a Caesar, fell by the hand of Valentinian; Torismund was slain by his own brothers; and Aegidius, who fought for Rome in Gaul, was assassinated.<sup>2</sup> And now the Roman empire crumbled to pieces like a burning ruin. Julius Nepos,<sup>3</sup> Emperor of the West, ceded the whole of Gaul, westward of the Rhone, to the Visigoths. Britain, Greece, Spain, and Italy, fell asunder from the mouldering edifice. The very date of Rome’s crowning disaster is uncertain, when the Goth, Odoacer, took the Eternal City and sent the imperial emblems to Constantinople. From the ruins of Rome’s splendid fortunes two bastard empires were indeed to rise. The one was the spiritual dominion of the Church, destined to rule as imperially, and to decay, perhaps, as hopelessly as the dominion of the sword; the other, bearing the proud title of the Holy

<sup>1</sup> 451.<sup>2</sup> 464.<sup>3</sup> 474.

Roman Empire, was to be built out of the very barbarian elements which, alone amongst barbarians, never learned to endure the yoke of Rome.

Odoacer resigned to Ewarik, a Visigoth, such authority as he had wielded in Gaul; and if Ewarik had lived longer he might have cemented the power of the Goths. But the star of Clovis<sup>1</sup> was in the ascendant, and it was for the Franks that the supremacy in Gaul was reserved. The Franks were the old friends and allies of the Roman people, and they had long remained content with the western bank of the Rhine. But on the decay of Rome they caught the infection from their Teutonic brethren. In 481, Childéric, king of the Salian Franks, died, leaving his son Clovis, a boy of fifteen, to succeed him. The youthful chief won the hearts of his people, and in 486, at the age of twenty-one, he entered Gaul, and defeated Syagrius, the last Roman who fought under the shadow of the Roman name. In 496 he repelled the Allemans, who were invading Gaul by way of the Rhiparian Franks. This battle, fought near Zulpich (Tolbiac), was the crisis of Clovis's fortunes and of the fortunes of France. The Franks were pagans; but Clovis had married the Christian Clotilde (Hlotchild), daughter of a Burgundian chief, influenced thereto by the judicious Remigius, bishop of Rheims, who had gained the friendship of the young Frank. The battle of Zulpich was at first doubtful, and Clovis swore to Clotilde that, if he gained the victory, her God should be his God. The victory was gained; Clovis, whose example was followed by 3000 of his warriors, kept his word. Christianity was wedded with the sword, and the Church secured to her new convert the kingdom which he coveted. Before Clovis died<sup>2</sup> he was not only the sole head of the Franks, but virtual master of the whole of Gaul, except Aquitaine.

<sup>1</sup> Hlodowig, the *h* being a guttural, and rendered in Latin by *c*. The first Latinised form was Chlodovechus, then Ludovicus.

Brittany, and a neighbouring portion of Normandy. During the half-century succeeding Clovis's death, his kingdom was divided into three parts—Burgundy, Austrasia (on either bank of the Rhine), and Neustria (between the Loire and the Meuse). Neustria was added to Austrasia by Pepin of Héristal.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Merving dynasty ended, and the Karoling dynasty began; and in the year 771, Karl the Great, commonly called Charlemagne, once more united all the Franks under a single sceptre.

Such, in mere outline, was the chain of events by which Pagan and Roman Gaul became changed into Christian France; and it is to the growth of Christianity in Gaul that we must look for the mainsprings of early French literature. But before passing on to this task it is necessary that we should inquire what were the principal influences of the Germanic infusion upon the social and intellectual condition of Gaul.

The German was a bigger, duller, simpler, more reserved and more independent man than his western neighbour; and, of course, at the time of his irruption into Gaul, he was less civilised. Characteristically a silent man, he was not clever at talking, and had no taste for oratory; whereas the Gaul was essentially a talker, and could talk well. The German was a child of the forest, who was accustomed to hunt his food before he ate it, and to dress himself in the skins of his prey. The Gaul preferred life in communities, and especially in well-built and well-governed towns, and his favourite dress, as we have seen, was such as would attract notice in a crowd. The German was, furthermore, domestic, and, as a rule, pure in his affections; the Gaul preferred a wider social circle than could be enjoyed in a single family or household, and his relations with his fellow-creatures were somewhat loose and light. The religion of the German was for the most part as between God and the individual; whilst that of the Gaul

was rather as between God and the tribe. Herein we may detect the characteristics which subsequently made the Teutonic race the leaders of a Protestant reaction ; whilst the descendants of the Gaul, the Iberian, the Roman, have clung to the hierarchical system of the Latin Church. The Gaul, again, readily admitted the institution of slavery ; but the German has never failed to repudiate it. In the Gallo-Roman household the slave was a conspicuous element ; but the well-to-do German was a patriarch in his own house, surrounded by his *leudes*—hangers-on, but not slaves—his *antrustions* (trusty fellows), and his *gesellen* or *gesithas* (comrades).

The predominance of the Franks in Gaul meant the predominance of these qualities in France for many generations, at all events until the general character of Frenchmen had become deeply imbued with the special virtues of their conquerors. On the development of Christianity in France, the Franks had, as will presently be seen, a powerful effect. If, in the ultimate formation of the French national character, the Gallic peculiarities have prevailed over the German—so different to what has happened in England between the ancient Britons and the Teutonic element—it is at least not difficult to trace through successive generations the important and durable influences of the Franks, the Goths, and the Burgundians. It was not long after the definite settlement of the Germans in Gaul that this action and reaction of race-characteristics began to manifest itself. The invaders freed the Gallo-Romans from much of their former dependence and helplessness ; but, on the other hand, the freedom of the meaner Germans gradually diminished, and domestic slavery, in spite of their manly efforts, gradually immeshed them. The two extreme conditions of society, which usually flourish side by side—slavery and an aristocracy of wealth and might—all but effaced the middle classes. For several centuries we find little trace of the latter except in commercial towns and muni-



cialities ; whereas the efforts from below and the oppression from above bear witness to the continual tendency of humanity to redress itself. And in particular the old Bagaudes broke out from time to time—largely recruited by the additional force which the people had acquired by the intermixture of races. The wars of kings and mayors succeeded for a long time in checking the wars between the enslaved and the powerful ; but when the kings ceased to fight the people had their day.

The speech of the invading Germans was not identical amongst the several tribes ; and their dialects were again distinct from the language of the Goths. All were affiliated to the Indo-Teutonic family of tongues, and bore to each other a closer relationship than did any of them to the Celtic or Iberian. It is not necessary for us to pursue these differences of speech, which have left few corresponding traces in the modern French tongue. It was the adopted Latin of the Gallo-Romans which was finally developed into the French of the troubadours and of the Renaissance ; and it was this language which the Franks were compelled to learn before they could govern their new possessions. Nor was the German literature much more influential upon the people who had been fascinated by and who sedulously cultivated the literature of Rome. Nevertheless it is important that we should bear in mind what the German literature actually was.<sup>1</sup>

The art of poetry, cultivated in some form or other by every nation, however young, was in the Teutonic race the first art brought to anything like perfection. The early poetic literature of the Germans was rich and varied ; they not only had the rudimentary lyric poetry common to all warlike tribes—songs of triumph, of mourning, of commemoration,—but they could boast of didactic poems, and of grand national epics like the *Nibelungen Lied*. The epic commemorating the

<sup>1</sup> For an able summary read Ozanam, *Etudes Germaniques*, i., *La Poésie*.

deeds of the Visigoth Brunhild, wife of Siegbert, King of Austrasia, would indeed rightly belong to the literature of France—as they do to her history—if the Franks of the sixth century had not yet been purely German; and had not their epics been written in the German language. It is perhaps a matter of surprise that the wars of the Neustrians, Austrasians, Burgundians, and Goths, have not left a deeper mark on French literature. If the reason is not already sufficiently evident, it will become more so as we proceed.

Yet one instance of a few may be here given, in which a Teutonic legend—which may probably be of Greek origin—has found a permanent home in France, and has reproduced itself in the French chivalrous romance. It is the legend which we glanced at ten pages back, the legend of the forgerman Vieland, which is to be met with in every Germanic tongue. In Iceland, to this day, a good smith is known by the name of a “volundr.” An early English poem narrates the sorrows of Vieland, who shod the horses of travellers as they broke their journey at his forge in Berkshire.<sup>1</sup> And the early French legends record how Galand (or Waland) made the three famous blades, Flamberge, Hauteclere, and Joyeuse.

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting epitome of nearly everything relating to the forgerman Wayland Smith, see Warton, *History of English Poetry*, ed. Hazlitt, i, Price's preface, pp. 63-65, and also vol. i. p. 135, note 1.

## CHAPTER II

## § 1. INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

PRACTICALLY speaking, the only written literature existing in France for many centuries after the birth of Christ consisted of the Latin and Greek writings of the Christian fathers and doctors, together with the works, in the same ancient tongues, of a few pagan grammarians and rhetoricians. As the popular literature, rarely committed to writing, and sung for the most part in the Iberian, Celtic, or Teutonic language, was confined exclusively to poetry, so the Latin and Greek writings, to which we have referred, were composed, as a rule, in more or less ornate prose. One or two Latin poets of Gallic origin have already been named, who acquired no inconsiderable fame amongst their contemporaries; but they had secured this fame only by residing in Rome, under the patronage of influential men, and appealing to the wider audience of cultivated Italy.

In estimating the effect produced upon the intellectual development of Gaul by Christian institutions and Christian writings, we must take into account the peculiar circumstances of the early Gallic Church. The converts were, to begin with, a small and persecuted sect; Greek emigrants from Asia Minor, the first of whom had possibly seen the Apostle to the Gentiles; and, after them, soldiers or runaway slaves from Rome. The earliest Christian community appears to have been founded at Lyons, which, from the time of

Augustus, had been the capital of Roman Gaul. Here, and at Vienne, the converts furtively worshipped, under the spiritual direction of Pothinus, an Asiatic Greek, who had been a disciple of Polycarp, said by some to have been a contemporary of the Apostles. The Greek origin of this first Gallican Christian Church is still further confirmed by tradition, as well as by the famous letter of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, which was written to Greeks in the Greek language.

This letter<sup>1</sup> was addressed by the martyrs from their prison, after enduring torture and mutilation, expecting every moment to be led out to death. They had braved the cruelty of the authorities; but certain Christian slaves being less constant, had given way beneath their torments, and had accused their masters of nameless crimes. One of them, however, the young Blandina, had shown extreme fortitude, saying, "I am a Christian; and no wickedness is carried on by us." For her reward she is held as the protomartyr of France, her name coming first in the commemoration of that glorious little band, in almost all the ancient martyrologies. The inscription of the letter referred to is as follows: "The servants of Jesus Christ, dwelling at Vienne and Lyons in Gaul, to the brethren of Asia and Phrygia, having the same faith and hope with us." After giving particulars of the persecution, the letter proceeds to say that there were about ten who fell through weakness, being ill prepared for the strife; that their fall afflicted them greatly, and depressed the courage of others who, not having yet been seized, were attending on the martyrs, and would not leave them, in spite of all which they had to endure, and that they were all in great fear by reason of the uncertainty of their confession; not dreading tortures, but looking to the end, and fearing lest one of them should

<sup>1</sup> The letter is given in the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius. Its authority is accepted by the majority of historians and critics, though Sismondi rejects it.



fall. And in describing the butchery the writer says, "The martyrs offered to God a crown of many colours, wherein shone all kinds of assorted flowers."

The first father of Gaul was Irenæus, another of Polycarp's disciples, and himself a Greek. He never lost his admiration for the Pagan literature of his native country, quoting Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, and the great dramatists. He was at Lyons during the persecution under Marcus Aurelius,<sup>1</sup> and Eusebius informs us that it was he who carried from the martyrs a second letter to Eleutherus, the Bishop of Rome. At all events he did not undertake this journey, as has been said, to obtain his appointment as successor to Pothinus, whom he replaced in the episcopal see of Lyons. It could not occur to any one, at the close of the second century, that the election of a bishop need be approved or confirmed by the Bishop of Rome.<sup>2</sup> The subsequent conduct of Irenæus in the dispute between eastern and western Christians concerning the observance of Easter, precludes the idea that he regarded Rome as supreme in the ecclesiastical economy. He held the Roman view of the matter, but he protested against the attempt to enforce it upon others, and energetically counselled the eastern bishops to maintain their independence. Thus the sturdy tone of the Gallican Church, which was destined to be characteristic of all Christian Churches of Greek origin, was manifested in the earliest age of French Christianity.

The only extant work of Irenæus is his *Treatise on Heresies*, wherein he attacks the errors of Gnosticism, and the other primary corruptions of the Christian faith. It is important to observe that already, at the close of the second century, we find emanating from French Christianity two species of documents which were to have a lasting influence upon French literature; namely, the "dogmatic treatise," in

<sup>1</sup> 177.

<sup>2</sup> Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. i. ch. 2, p. 169.

a style severe, classical, more or less ornate, and the records of Christian suffering, the basis of future "martyrologies." To these must be added a third species, the letters written from church to church, containing edifying records of the death of children and others, which were read out in an interval of divine service, and which formed the foundation of the "sacred legends," which have in all ages been a speciality of Christian literature.

Such were the elements of Christian literature in France ; but the vista thus opened is instantly closed again. For more than a century after the death of Irenæus, no doctor, no commentator on Christian dogma, ethics, or history, wrote in Gaul what succeeding generations cared to imitate or preserve ; or, at all events, no documents of the character indicated are extant. But the third century has a literature of its own ; and Gaul boasts during this period many grammarians, orators, and panegyrists, who adorned—or rather illumined—the paganism of the time. Their style was distinctly classical, though their matter was not always so. They were classical in the most meagre and least worthy sense ; being utterly devoid of originality, and yet adepts in the art of imitation. They shaped their writings upon the best models ; and the genius of their race, to whom Cato ascribes the gift *argutè loqui*, enabled them to succeed in producing elegant copies of their originals. One of the best of these writers was Titian, who taught rhetoric in the schools of Lyons and Besançon (the Roman Lugdunum and Vesontio). Much admired in his own day, and even since, he has been called the ape of orators. His favourite productions were imitations of Ovid in manner and of Cicero in style ; consisting of fictitious letters from famous women of ancient times. Mademoiselle de Scudéry wrote something like it, in *les Femmes illustres*, and Walter Savage Landor, in England, in some of his *Imaginary Conversations* ; and perhaps neither of the

latter would yield to Titian in his attachment to the literary forms of classic Rome.

## § 2. THE PANEGYRISTS.

The panegyrists are the most prominent figures of this period. The Gallo-Romans who could write well seem to have vied with each other in declaiming on the virtues and glories of the great men of their day, from the Emperors downwards; and as the Emperors of Rome in her decadence loved Gaul, and frequently resided there, one cannot be at a loss to find probable reasons for the complacencies of these literary men. It speaks little for the national spirit of independence, and less for the self-respect of those whose culture might have raised them above a taste for sycophancy; but the fact remains that these panegyrics, though built upon Greek models, or imitated after the least worthy of the Roman eulogists, were in this age pre-eminently characteristic of Gallic writers. A collection has been made of twelve *Panegyrici Veteres*, as affording a sample of what the third century produced; and ten of these are the work of Gallo-Romans. The name of this kind of composition is, like its origin, Greek; for it was during the Olympic Games that the earliest panegyrics—extempore discourses on an assigned subject—were spoken. The coarser idea of personal eulogy was of later date, and was accepted by the Gallo-Romans—of course as being congenial—from the neighbours whom they strove so sedulously to imitate. Nevertheless their immediate models were Latin, not Greek; and the eulogy of Trajan by Pliny was the great exemplar.

Of the ten panegyrics referred to, two were pronounced before the Emperor Maximian I., in honour of himself and of Diocletian, A.D. 292. They have been wrongly ascribed to Mamertinus, who declaimed before Julian seventy years later.

Their authorship cannot be assigned ; and it is no more than a surmise that they were spoken at Treves on the Rhine. With respect to another, uttered in the year 296 at Autun, before Constantius Chlorus, the particulars are more exact. It was the work of Eumenius, a Greek by parentage but Gallic by birth. He was under the patronage of Chlorus, held a legal appointment, and was a director of schools ; and the little that we know of him entitles him to be absolved from the reproach which his panegyric might be supposed to attach to his memory. For we are told that when the Emperor bestowed upon him offices amounting in value to something like one thousand pounds of our present money, Eumenius accepted them only on the condition of applying the proceeds to the restoration of the schools at Autun ; which thenceforth recovered their ancient repute—a repute at least as old as the time of Tacitus.

The panegyric of Eumenius is addressed to the prefect of the province who represented Chlorus in his absence, and whom the orator styles “*vir perfectissimus*”—whether conventionally, or out of a genuine appreciation of his merits, or, as a commentator suggests, as an exhortation to deserve the title. One of the most striking passages in the oration is that wherein Eumenius contrasts the rhetoric of the school with the forensic eloquence of the courts. “Here,” he says, “the wits arm themselves, there they fight ; here is the skirmish, there the onslaught ; here they attack each other with arrows and stones, there they cross their gleaming swords !”

This is perhaps the most worthy and independent of the Gallo-Roman panegyrics, which would hardly have repaid even this short notice if they had not been almost the only evidence of literary activity in Gaul during the third century. Hard pushed by the Germans, crushed and plundered by the Romans, disturbed by the insurrections of the peasants, the unfortunate country had but little spirit or opportunity for



intellectual exertion. That which they did display was directed, as we have seen, to a more or less abject flattery of the Roman Emperors. One of the panegyrists praises Constantine for his slaughter of the barbarians, declaring that the very beasts were satiated by the number of their victims. Another asks, "What is there more grand than the triumph which makes the destruction of our enemies contribute to our pleasures?" Another traces the descent of Maximian from Hercules, asserting Alexander himself too humble for the purpose of comparison.

Meanwhile the social condition of the country was by no means the chaos which we might have expected to find it. Side by side with the despotic government of the Romans, and with the hardly less despotic government of the Goths and Franks, who succeeded them; side by side with the aristocracy which had been introduced into the Greek colonies of the south, or which had grown up spontaneously in other parts of Gaul; in spite of the incursions of barbarians, in spite of grinding taxation, of slavery, of insurrections, we find throughout these Ages, dating its origin almost before the records of trustworthy history, growing gradually in power and stability, a democratic element, municipal right, free citizenship. Roman despotism resigned its position as guardian over the State; the German invaders fought amongst themselves, seldom on any other plea than that of selfish interest; the aristocracy showed no coherent power which was capable of rescuing society from imminent dissolution; but the municipalities survived. The cities became asylums for those who fled to them for refuge, and they kept alive the flickering flame of learning and literature in the schools. Based, doubtless, on the foundation of commerce and trade, these Gallic municipalities raised a standard of comparative order and good government under which letters and religion rallied for renewed efforts, and prepared for further conquests. And it is

to Christianity in particular—to the Christianity of Irenæus and of the martyrs of Vienne and Lyons, cherished and handed down during this silent epoch in the history of the Gallic intellect—that we must look for the regeneration of intellectual life.

### § 3. THE TEACHERS.

The Christian Church in Gaul in the second century was a Greek Church ; in the fourth century it was a Latin Church. After the time of Irenæus we hear little more of the community of Christians at Lyons, whilst, during the third and fourth centuries, we find many accounts of Roman evangelists and Roman martyrs. Nevertheless the Gallic Church maintains many of the characteristics which were impressed upon it in its first phase, and never loses its distinctive feature of independence, although, of course, it soon came to acknowledge the spiritual pre-eminence of Rome. The accounts of the foundation of the Gallo-Roman Church differ considerably, and it is not for us to decide between them. One thing, however, is certain and natural, that Gaul was to a large extent Christianised from within. The “little leaven” of the early Greek Churches in the south spread far and wide during the second and third centuries, and the blood of the martyrs of Vienne and Lyons became the seed of the Gallican Church. Priority in point of time would render this a matter of course, but it is not to be doubted that the Roman Christians who followed them carried the Gospel into regions whither the disciples of Irenæus and Photinus had never penetrated. Gregory of Tours,<sup>1</sup> who asserts that Irenæus himself suffered “horrible torments,” relates that in the reign of the Emperor Decius, after a widespread persecution of the Christians, during which the Roman believers would naturally be scat-

<sup>1</sup> Born 539.

tered throughout the Latin-speaking colonies of Europe, seven persons of the rank of bishops "were sent to preach in Gaul;" and he gives for his authority "the history of the sufferings of the holy martyr Saturninus," one of the seven, and the first bishop of Toulouse. The other six were Gatian of Tours, Paul of Narbonne, Martial of Limoges, Stremon of Clermont, Trophimus of Arles, and Bacchus or Denis of Paris. It will be observed that the latter names are Greek, so that even under this new evangelisation Christianity came to Gaul in combination with Greek ideas and idiosyncrasies. A disciple of one of these, says Gregory, went to Bourges, and there made converts and ordained priests. Requiring a house in which to celebrate divine worship, and his converts being amongst the poorest citizens, he went to "one of the leading senators<sup>1</sup> in Gaul," Leocades, a descendant of the Lyons martyr Vettius Epagathus, and therefore a Greek, and stated their need. Leocades replied, "If the house which I own in Bourges is worthy of such an employment, I will not refuse it." Whereupon they offered him three hundred pieces of gold and a silver dish, assuring him that his house *was* worthy. Leocades took three pieces in token of good will, and, furthermore, himself became a Christian. The story has its manifest improbabilities, but, even if it were not true, it would be characteristic.

After the persecutions under Diocletian the Christians had a respite from their sufferings under his successor Constantine, the thirty-fourth Roman Emperor, who accepted the new faith. He was a patron of letters as well as of Christianity, and Jerome asserts that he encouraged Juvenius to paraphrase the Gospel in verse. During his reign the first Christian councils were held in Gaul. That of Arles, A.D. 314, was convened for the purpose of considering and pro-

<sup>1</sup> Gregory uses the word "senators" of municipal councillors, as well as of members of the Roman Senate, or sometimes of any one whose family had produced a man of senatorial mark.

nouncing upon the Donatist heresy. Forty-four churches were here represented, of which sixteen were Gallic, and the place of meeting attests the activity and influence of the Gallic Christians. The second council was held at Nicea, A.D. 325. The Emperor Constantine attended both these councils, and formally directed their deliberations. The very presence of the Emperor in a council was a triumph of the Church, and bore witness to its victory rather than to its submission.<sup>1</sup> Sixteen councils were held during the fourth century, almost all in Gaul, and at least six of these were confined to the bishops of Gaul alone.

To this century belongs the poet and philosopher Lactantius,<sup>2</sup> an African Roman settled at Treves. He began life as a pagan rhetorician, being a disciple of the African Arnobius. He adopted Christianity during the persecution under Diocletian, and in the year 317 he came to Gaul as tutor to one of the sons of Constantine. His principal philosophical work is his *Divine Institutions*. He also wrote treatises on the *Anger of God* and on the *Death of Persecutors*. Some are even inclined to credit him with the authorship of the *Phoenix*, a poem in the Ovidian style, though they do so on grounds which are not sufficient to establish more than a probability. He was certainly a genuine man of letters, whose literary tastes were moulded upon the classic poets and orators of Rome, and he has been not undeservedly called the "Christian Cicero." He was a zealous apologist of his adopted faith, though his detractors have made a list of ninety-four passages in which his orthodoxy is subject to exception. He certainly displayed his catholic judgment in the freedom of his appeal to pagan authorities, passing in this respect far beyond the example of St. Paul and Irenæus, though not reaching the point attained in later days by Jeremy Taylor. Less catholic in spirit was the prejudice manifested by Lactantius against

<sup>1</sup> Guizot, *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, vol. i., leçon 3.    <sup>2</sup> 259-260.



the enemies of Christianity, whom he consigned to everlasting shame and torment, and in whom he would see no redeeming points. Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and other pagan emperors, who were by no means destitute of noble qualities, he places on a level with Nero and Diocletian. "Where are they?" he exclaims. "God has destroyed them; they are blotted out from the earth."

His *Divine Institutions* consist of a defence of Christianity and an exposition of Christian dogma; and whilst they are crude and imperfect in their argument, trying to prove too much and proving nothing thoroughly, they are nevertheless elegant in style and persuasive in manner, calculated, therefore, to exert no inconsiderable influence on succeeding generations. He was strongly imbued with the idea that the work of destruction would be homologous with the work of creation so far as the material world was concerned; that after six millenniums of humanity's labour there would come a millennium of rest for the human race, when Jesus Christ would reign visibly on earth. He himself was born towards the close of the sixth millennium; the world had reached its *tempora pessima, ultima tempora*, and the catastrophe was at hand.

"The whole earth," he says, "shall be in confusion; war shall rage throughout; nations shall take arms, and attack each other. . . . The sword shall pass through the world, sweeping down and laying low as it were a harvest; and the cause of this desolation and bloodshed shall be that the Roman name, which now governs the universe (it is hard to say it, but I say it because it must be)—the Roman name shall be wiped from the earth. The empire shall return to the east, the east shall reign again, and the west shall be subdued." And again, presaging ruin from the north:—"Then shall come a hateful, abominable time, when life shall be pleasant to no man. Cities shall be turned upside

down; they shall perish, not only by water and fire, but by earthquakes, deluges, plagues, and famines. The air shall be corrupted and plague-stricken. . . . The land shall bear fruit no more; the harvest, the tree, the vine shall be smitten with barrenness; the streams and springs shall dry up; their waters shall be turned to blood and bitterness; the animals shall die, upon earth, in the air, and in the sea."

Then follow prophecies more distinct, of Antichrist and of the second coming of the Lord:—"The heavens shall be opened in the middle of a dark and stormy night. To the whole universe shall appear, like a sheet of lightning, the splendour of the descending God. But, before descending, the liberator, the judge, the avenger, the King, shall cause a sign to appear: a sword shall suddenly fall from heaven, that the just may know that the leader of the holy army is at hand." Of such a kind are the outbursts of imagination and poetry which proclaim the predecessor of the eloquent pulpit-orators of the age of Louis XIV.

Another Gaul of the fourth century, a native of Bordeaux, successively a professor of rhetoric, the tutor of the Emperor Valentinian's son, and a consul of the empire under his former pupil Gratian, was Ausonius,<sup>1</sup> a Christian imitator of the pagan panegyrists, whose taste clung to pagan literature whilst his heart was given to Christianity. We in these days think no shame of mingling the classical mythology of Greece and Rome even with the discussion of things divine. It is inextricably interwoven with our intellectual culture and tendencies, but the use which Ausonius made of it betrays a characteristic hardihood of mind. It was a literary fashion, over which Boileau and Bossuet were to argue with no slight degree of warmth; a literary license which is to be carefully distinguished between a new and an old creed,

<sup>1</sup> 310-394.

whereby, perhaps, some of the early Christians—it may be Ausonius amongst the number—suffered themselves to be seduced.

Ausonius was also a poet, and he celebrates in verse the great cities of antiquity. His *Ordo Nobilium Urbium* enumerates the glories and the industries of Rome, Constantinople, Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch, Treves, thus placing sixth in his list the Roman city on the Rhine, where the emperors had long preferred to hold their court, which contained an extensive manufactory of armour, and which was the great foreign emporium of English woollen goods. His tenth city is Arles, and Toulouse, the fourteenth, is succeeded by Narbonne and Bordeaux. His description of Arles is interesting. He calls it the Lesser Rome of Gaul, which received the commerce of the world. Bordeaux he describes as *insignis Baccho*. Aquitaine he vaunts as a district famous for its elegant and polished manners. In fact, the south-west of Gaul was the fostering home of letters, and Ausonius himself addressed thirty copies of verse to as many professors of rhetoric at Bordeaux. The insight which he gives us, here and elsewhere, into the state of learning in Gaul during the fourth century, is such as we cannot afford to neglect. A rescript of Gratian authorises every metropolitan town to elect professors of rhetoric, who were remunerated from the state coffers with twenty-four *annonæ*, that is twenty times the amount paid to a Roman legionary, whilst the “grammarian” received half that amount. In the royal city of Treves a professor received thirty *annonæ*, a Latin grammarian twenty, and a Greek grammarian twelve. The work of the grammarian varied from the instruction of children to the delivery of public letters during six hours of the day, or, in the case of one mentioned by Ausonius, to the pursuit of a comparison between the legislation of different countries. The endowment of research was a matter which, by a caprice

of despotism, was as thoroughly provided for in the Dark Ages as in our own more enlightened days.<sup>1</sup>

Ausonius was in addition a dramatist—he wrote the *Play of the Seven Sages*. It is rather a succession of monologues than a drama. The seven sages of Greece are made to appear one after the other, and, after pronouncing a maxim in Greek, expound it in Latin. The author clearly intended his work for public representation, for he describes how his characters advance upon the stage, clad in their cloaks.<sup>2</sup> And, apologising for his actors in the prologue, he says: “Why do you blush, O Roman, in your toga, because these illustrious men appear upon the stage? It is a reproach to us, but it was none to the Athenians, amongst whom the theatre was considered a public meeting-place. . . . So it is in the whole of Greece.”

M. Ampère would claim the contemporary play of *Querolus*, the Grumbler, which has been attributed to Plautus, for a Gallic writer. It is certainly not anterior to the third century. It refers to the revolt of the Bagaudes, on the banks of the Loire, and is dedicated to Rutilius, a celebrated Gallo-Latin poet. *Querolus* is a genuine drama, and a piece of spirited character-drawing. If its Gallic origin were well established, it would have demanded at our hands a most careful dissection and discussion.

Amongst the Gallic Christian writers of the fourth century were Paulinus, a poet full of tenderness, a disciple and friend of Ausonius, his correspondence with whom is still preserved, and to whom St. Augustine dedicated one of his treatises; Sulpicius Severus, an ecclesiastical historian of no mean order, though—or rather because—he attempted to give little more than an abstract of his predecessors' voluminous narratives; Martin, a writer of legends and

<sup>1</sup> Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. i. ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Palliat in orchestrum procedunt.*



Christian sagas, and an epigrammatist of whom even the monks of his day had cause to be afraid, and who managed on several occasions to get the better of Satan in argument; Hilarius, bishop of Poitiers, a notable opponent of Arianism, exiled to Phrygia on that account by the Council of Béziers, author of a *Treatise on the Trinity*, and other controversial works; Ambrosius, the champion of Christianity against pagan reaction, as instanced in his discussion with Symmachus, and of morality and ecclesiastical independence against the corrupt presumption of the usurper Maximus, to whom he would pay no open honour or deference; and Cassianus, the anchorite, author of *Institutions of Monasteries*, and a volume of *Collations* or dialogues; Vigilantius, a southern Gaul, who protested against the vow of celibacy, and who has been described as "the Gascon Luther;" and Prosper of Aquitaine, who has left us his biography, a *Chronicle*, a volume of *Epigrams*, and a poem on *Grace*.

Such were the Christians of Gaul who, albeit in a foreign tongue, laid the foundations of French literature; who revealed, as they wrote, many of the same characteristics which are to be discovered in their descendants, and whose works have had their due effect in modelling the style and spirit of the moderns. The struggle and victory of Christianity in Gaul was something more than a struggle of the Gospel against paganism, and of a new morality against the ancient corruption of the world; it was a revendication of the victims of Imperial Rome. For the country, as we have seen, did not accept her faith from the oppressors who had passed her under the yoke, but rather in spite of them. The early confessors of Christianity in Gaul had reason to fear the favour of the emperors and their courts as much as their hatred; the hurt which the Gallic Church received from the one was as great as that which resulted from the other. Nor was Rome the only enemy against whom she had to contend, and against whom

she contended so successfully that, on more than one occasion, Gaul marched in the van of pure and orthodox Christianity. Errors of practice and doctrine assailed her from the East and from the West; Gnosticism, Arianism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism, Eutychism—all of these felt the weight of her independent logic, her intellectual vigour and shrewdness. Nevertheless against one or two, the first two of these encroachments, her arm was destined to prove weak, and her resistance comparatively brief. The pride of knowledge which, in the schools of Alexandria and the East, generated the earliest Christian heresy, had its special temptations for the vainglorious and self-confident Gaul, whilst the legacy of the Greek and Roman philosophies, the Arian tendency towards rationalism—the offspring especially of Platonism and Christianity—proved in the end irresistible to a race which had so eagerly accepted the civilisation of southern Europe. Another enemy had appeared, hardly less formidable, in the oriental idea of monasticism, which, whatever it might have done for Christianity, could not be other than baneful in its effects on the intellect. Against this corruption also the genius of Gallic Christianity maintained a vigorous struggle; and thus, amidst strife and victory, relapse and recovery, the bulwarks of faith and intelligence were sustained until the worldly empire of Rome had passed away, and her ecclesiastical supremacy had begun to assert itself.

Meanwhile the Germans had entered Gaul, driving out the Roman soldiers before them, and three great battles raged side by side upon the soil which has so often been the theatre of the fortunes of Europe. They were the battles of Christianity against the world, of the Gallic Church against pagan philosophy, of Gaul and Rome against the barbarians. Side by side stood three men, so different in their character and their tendencies, representing such varied phases of human history and intellect, as Theodoric the Goth, Salvian the

Christian Gaul, and Rutilius, the last great pagan writer of the Gallo-Romans. Amidst these struggles the Church lost much of her early purity, stooping, but stooping too low, in order to conquer the new masters of Gaul. Rutilius and Salvian alike, from their different points of view, attacked the corruptions of the Christian community; and they were alike in one thing else, that they both attacked them with satire. Rutilius wrote epigrams against the Jews and the monks; Salvian inveighs bitterly against the avarice and decaying faith of his co-religionists. "Thou hast lost," thus he apostrophises the Church in Gaul, "thy indifference to earthly wealth and thy love of heavenly blessings . . . thou hast gained more vices in proportion as thou hast gained more nations . . . the richer thou hast become in numbers, the poorer hast thou become in devotion, at once greater and smaller, in progress and in decay." Amongst the Teutonic invaders there were Christians, the majority of whom had accepted Arianism. In his hatred of corruption, Salvian passes lightly over this error of belief. "They are heretics," he says of the barbarians, "but they know it not; with us they are so, but not with themselves. They think themselves catholic, even accusing you of heresy; the truth is on our side, but they think they possess it; they err, but their intention is right." And again he bears witness to the morality of life amongst the Saxons, the Vandals, and the Goths; contrasting it with the vices of the Romans, not without implication against the professed Christians of Roman Gaul.

#### § 4. THE CHRONICLERS.

The life of Sidonius Apollinaris, a native of Lyons, who flourished in the middle of the fifth century, contains a valuable illustration of the action and reaction between Gallic

Christianity and Teutonic barbarism. He married the daughter of Avitus, afterwards emperor, and at the coronation of the latter he pronounced a panegyric in verse before the Roman Senate, which he did likewise for Majorianus and Anthemius. At this time he was a pagan, and yet, within three years of his return from Rome, after his attendance upon Anthemius, he was consecrated bishop. He was not a Roman patrician for nothing. One of his first acts was to condemn the writing of profane poetry, and he abandoned a history of Attila's invasion, which he had already begun. No doubt his conversion was sincere, and his adoption of Christianity conscientious ; but he never attempted to throw aside his lightness of heart, his pungency of expression, and his satirical humour. He makes a joke on the subject of fasting ; he laughs pleasantly at the notion of praying for rain or fine weather, suggesting that the potter and the gardener might not agree about the matter. Mamertius dedicated to him a refutation of Faustus on the materiality of the soul. Sidonius thanks him in a hundred hyperboles, adding that he knows nothing of the subject in dispute. Nor is he afraid of indulging in pagan illustrations, or of continuing to model his style on that of pagan authors. He is, in fact, the Dean Swift, or better, the Sydney Smith of the Gallic Church.

The centre of his see was Arvernum, now replaced by Clermont, and this town was taken possession of by the Goths. Sidonius displayed the best side of his character in the face of his country's enemies, and maintained the dignity and sanctity of his faith in presence of the invading hordes. His wife's family, the most influential Romans of Auvergne, withstood the Goths for several years ; but Sidonius intervened to bring about a truce. This *induciarum imago*, as he calls it, was soon broken ; and he writes to Mamertius—" It is rumoured that the Goths are advancing upon the Roman territory. Wretched Arvernians, we are ever the gateway of



invasion." The bishop inspired courage into his people, and appointed days of rogation and prayer, uniting the patriot and the Christian. The Goths retired ; but the Arvernians were presently delivered by treaty into the hands of their enemies, in order to stave off the advance upon Marseilles. Exile and imprisonment were the lot of Sidonius ; but he was released through the mediation of a friend, and after gaining a certain influence over Erik, king of the Visigoths, who had taken up his quarters at Bordeaux, he was restored to his bishopric, and died there A.D. 489.

The letters of Sidonius, together with other contemporary and later documents, give us a vivid picture of the customs and manner of life in Gaul during the fifth century, from which it appears that the Gallo-Roman civilisation was not by any means contemptible, nor their literary culture insignificant. And the documents in question betray, moreover, that the Christian and pagan communities had by this time approximated in a very remarkable degree, being no longer divided by a sharp line of demarcation, as indeed must have been evident in the very meagre sketch above given of the life of Sidonius. "Great lords, hardly to be called Christians, ex-prefects of Gaul, men of the world and men of pleasure, frequently became bishops. In the end they were compelled to this course, if they wished to bear a part in the moral movement of the age, to preserve any real importance, to exert any active influence."<sup>1</sup>

For example, let us take this letter from Sidonius to Eriphius, the son-in-law of Philimathius, the writer's deceased friend:—

"You are ever the same, dear Eriphius ; the hunting-field, the city, the country never attract you so powerfully that the love of letters cannot still retain you. . . . You bid me send you the verses which I made at the request of your father-in-law,

<sup>1</sup> Guizot, *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, Lect. 3.

that respected gentleman, who, in the society of his equals, was equally ready to command and to obey. But as you wish to know where and on what occasion these verses were made, that you may the better understand this trifling production, blame yourself if the preface be longer than the work itself.

“We had met at the tomb of St. Just,<sup>1</sup> when sickness prevented your being with us. The annual procession had been made before dawn, amidst a vast assemblage of the populace of both sexes, which the basilica and the crypt could not contain, although they are surrounded by immense porches. After the monks and clerks had celebrated matins, singing the psalms alternately with much sweetness, every one withdrew in various directions, though not very far, so as to be ready for the tierce when the priests were to celebrate the divine sacrifice. The narrow dimensions of the place, the crowd pressing about us, and the great number of lights, had suffocated us; the oppressive moisture of a summer night, still recent, albeit cooled by the first freshness of an autumn morn, had yet warmed the edifice. Whilst the different classes of society were scattered on all sides, the principal citizens went and gathered round the tomb of Syagrius, not a bowshot away. Some were seated under the shade of a trellis formed of laths, which were covered by the green branches of the vine; we were reclining on a green lawn balmy with the perfume of flowers. The conversation was pleasant, mirthful, jocular; moreover (which was particularly agreeable), there was no discussion concerning powers or tributes, not a word which could compromise, and not a soul who could be compromised. Whoever could relate an interesting story in apt words was sure to be listened to with attention. Above all, there was no giving of connected narratives, for our hilarity often interrupted our speech. Tired at last of this long rest, we felt a desire to do something. Presently dividing ourselves into two companies, according to age, the first loudly called for a game of tennis, the others for a table and dice. I was the first to make a move for the tennis; for, as you know, I love it as much as my books. On the other hand, my brother Domicius, a man of great elegance and love of sport, got hold of some dice, rattled

<sup>1</sup> The feast of St. Just, a former bishop, was held on the 2d of September.

them, and rapped his dice-box as though he was sounding a trumpet to summon the players to him. As for us, we had a long game with the scholars, in order to refresh our limbs, numbed by a too long rest, by this healthy exercise. The noble Philimathius himself, as the Mantuan poet says,

Ausus et ipse manu juvenum tentare laborem,

constantly mingled with the tennis-players. He excelled at it when he was younger; but when he had been frequently hustled from the middle, where they stood upright, by the shock of some player running against him; when, at other times, going within the base, he could neither bar the way nor get out of the way of the ball, as it flew before him, or came upon him, and found a difficulty in recovering himself from his falls, being frequently overturned, he was the first to leave the game, panting and greatly heated. The exercise had caused his liver to swell, and he suffered a sharp pain. I stopped shortly afterwards, by way of charitably stopping at the same time as he, and thus relieving our brother from the annoyance of his fatigue. We then seated ourselves once more, and presently his perspiring made him ask for some water to bathe his face. They brought him some, and with it a plate bearing a napkin which had been washed over night, and happened to be hung upon a rope stretched over a pulley, before the folding-doors of the porter's cottage. As he was slowly drying his cheeks, he said: 'I wish you would dictate for me four verses on the article which I am making use of.' 'Done,' I replied. 'But,' he added, 'let my name be included in the verses.' I answered that what he asked was feasible. 'Well,' he rejoined, 'dictate then.' Whereupon I said, smiling, 'But, you ought to know that the muses will take it ill if I attempt to mingle in their company amongst so many witnesses.' Then he replied smartly, and yet with courtesy (for he was a man of spirit and inexhaustible wit), 'Rather take heed, my lord Solius, that Apollo is not still more irritated if you seek to seduce in secret and apart one of his dear pupils.' You may imagine the applause excited by this quick and well-turned reply. Then, without delay, I called his secretary, who stood by with his tablets in his hand, and dictated to him the following quatrain:—'Another morning when he leaves

his hot bath, or when the chase has heated his brow, may handsome Philimathius still find this linen to dry his dripping face, so that the water may pass from his brow into this fleece as into a drinker's throat.' Hardly had your Epiphanius written these verses when we were told that the hour had struck, and that the bishop was leaving his house, and we rose at once."

Of such a nature were the recreations of a bishop—and possibly enough Sidonius was not the only bishop in that company—in the fifth century; and the picture is full of suggestions and outlines that may easily be filled in. One thing is manifest, that the aristocracy of Gaul had for the most part become transferred from the civil to the religious community; or, at least, that the Christian Church comprised within itself a genuine aristocracy, not only of wealth but of learning, accomplishments, and manners. There were of course men of influence and culture in the army, and in the highest offices of the State; and of these, no doubt, many were pagans. But it was within the pale of the church, and occasionally in the still greater security of the monasteries, that the Gallic literature of this period mainly sought refuge, and that particularly when there ceased to be a Roman court in Gaul. It has been the same in every country. Learning has saved itself from suppression by its marriage with Christianity, and the church has been the patron and the foster-mother of that very culture which began by despising her. It is true that a partial separation has since become necessary, when the danger of obscurantism on one hand, and scepticism on the other, made both a little shy of their mutual intimacy; but neither Literature nor Christianity could have dispensed with the interchange of benefits which has resulted from their communion.

It is to be observed that the pagan classical literature disappeared rapidly at the time of which we speak; and this under a double discouragement. The Teutons had little or



no taste for Greek or Latin authors, and rarely cared, even in France, to learn the Greek or Latin language. The Christians who had been converted from paganism either resigned their classical studies, or refrained from urging them upon others; whilst Christians born into the Church found little encouragement to become acquainted with any literature save that of the inspired writers, the fathers and the doctors of Christianity. It is true that the two ancient languages of southern Europe became, and remained for many centuries, the universal languages of the Church; and by virtue of this adoption, they became the medium for such extraneous literature as was permitted to emanate from within her pale. The inhabitants of the monasteries, for instance, were originally all laymen, and they were free from many of the restraints which held the intellect of the ecclesiastics in a narrow groove. Hence it is from the monasteries chiefly that most of the early secular history and poetry proceeded; and it was in the schools of the monks that the most liberal education was to be obtained. The Teutons themselves, before they had adopted Christianity to any large extent, rarely built or supported schools; whilst the Church, though it never failed to establish seminaries in connection with every bishopric, if not with every important centre of worship, did so in the first place mainly for the training of her own priests, or of those who were in any capacity to take part in her services. Nevertheless, we do not wish to imply that the study of pagan antiquity entirely ceased. There can have been but few literary pagans in the sixth century; but at all events there were professed philosophers, after the ancient Greek and Latin schools of philosophy; and it was probably in the monasteries that these relics of the learning of the old world found their asylum. Thus, in fact, was preserved in the darkness of these Ages the savour of knowledge which was to form the basis of modern intellectual regeneration.

Forty years after the death of Sidonius was born Gregory, bishop of Tours ;<sup>1</sup> and his famous *Ecclesiastical History of the Franks* makes us acquainted with much concerning the progress of letters, and the reactions of religious and civil society, of which we should otherwise have remained in ignorance. He also, like Sidonius, belonged to a patrician family, counting amongst his ancestors both senators and bishops. His uncle was bishop of Arvernum, and he had given his nephew a liberal education. Gregory obtained, at all events before his death, an acquaintance with Virgil, Sallust, Pliny, and Aulus Gellius ; but he takes care expressly to guard himself against being thought to admire them too strongly, or even to imitate their style. He prides himself on being rough and straightforward in his manner of writing ; departing thus, to a certain extent, from the genius of his race, and affording an apt illustration of the opposition between Christian and pagan literature, to which reference was made above. At the same time he was a historian by choice and by fact, and not a theologian ; and though he calls his history ecclesiastical, the bulk of it is secular. Yet Gregory appears to have been a sincere Christian, as well as a blunt and obstinate Gaul. He stood like a rock against the encroachments of the world upon Christianity, as well as against the overbearing conduct of the Frank and Gothic kings, towards all who appealed to him for protection. He was a general of the Church militant in Gaul. When the young Merovig sought asylum with him, he held him safe against the wrath of Chilpéric and Frédégonde, without losing the respect of either. He himself relates an anecdote which displays at once his bluntness and courage in the face of those who had the power to crush him, his obstinacy in argument, and his want of skill in intellectual fence.

Chilpéric, grandson of Clovis, set up as a poet and as a theologian. He was distinguished in the one accomplishment

<sup>1</sup> 539.

by his false quantities, and in the other by his Arianism ; but Gregory, who hated the Arians, and who had flatly disobeyed the behest of Frédégonde to drive Merovig out of his church, on the plea "that one must not do under Catholic kings that which was not done under Arian kings," did not shine in his arguments with Chilpéric. The latter objected to speak of the persons of the Trinity. "You," he said to Gregory, "and the other doctors have taken that view." Gregory discussed the subject warmly, and adduced Hilarius and Eusebius as authorities on his side. But Chilpéric was too strong for him, proving on the spot that those two writers did not agree on the question. Whereupon the stubborn bishop declared that "one must be mad to think so." And Chilpéric grumbled and was silent.<sup>1</sup> The Gallic Church had made its mark before this became possible.

Gregory withstood Chilpéric and Frédégonde, in the name of the Church, in far more critical circumstances, and with greater success. The king imagined that Pretextatus, bishop of Rouen, had brought about the marriage of Merovig and Brunhild, and he summoned him to Paris before a council of Gallic bishops. Gregory defended the accused, and did not stint his arguments against the flattery of the king, the bribes of the queen, or the subservience of his fellow-bishops. But Pretextatus was cowed ; he admitted his offence, and craved Chilpéric's pardon. Then Chilpéric "prostrated himself at the feet of the bishops, and said, 'Hear, most pious bishops ! The guilty one has confessed his execrable crime.' Then we wept, and raised the king, and he ordered Pretextatus to leave the Church. He himself withdrew to his residence, and sent to us the books of the canons, whereto had been added a new part, containing those which are called apostolic, wherein are these words : 'The bishop convicted of homicide, adultery, or perjury, shall be deprived of his see.' . . . After that the king

<sup>1</sup> *Freudens siluit.*

demanded, either that his (Pretextatus') gown should be torn, or that we should read over him the 108th Psalm, containing the curses against Judas Iscariot, or that we should sign a judgment to deprive him for ever of communion. I refused all these conditions, in view of the king's promise that nothing should be done contrary to the canons. Then Pretextatus was carried out before our eyes, and delivered over to the guards. Having attempted to escape during the night, he was severely beaten, and exiled to an island near Coutances."<sup>1</sup> On this **an** eminent French historian<sup>2</sup> remarks, "The idea of a rule raised above the unfettered passions which disturb the barbarian community exists nowhere but in the Church."

Amidst the dark chronicle of bloodshed and crime which Gregory has transmitted to us, we obtain little evidence of light or of intellectual promise beyond that which is revealed in the history of the Church. There are not wanting, however, certain indistinct evidences of a literary influence exerted by the Teutons over their Gallic subjects, which may fairly supplement what we have said on the same topic in the previous chapter. Gregory mentions several legends and songs which can be traced to an older German source. Such is the story of Ermanric,<sup>3</sup> and the circumstances of his murder, for which a precedent may be found in the Lay of Hamdir;<sup>4</sup> the battle of Theodoric with the Thuringians, when the corpses of the slain choked the bed of the river, so that the king's army marched over the palpitating human bridge—significantly reminding us of an episode in the Nibelungen Lied; the account of Clovis seeking a ford over the Vienne, and discovering it by the sight of a crossing stag—which is related also of the Huns, on their advance upon

<sup>1</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, book v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> M. Ampère.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, book iii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> See in *The Edda of Saemund the Learned*, ed. Thorpe, part ii. 141, "The Lay of Hamdir."



Rome. So again of the legend of Basina, queen of Thuringia, who left her husband for Childéric, feeling him to be the most valiant of kings. Here indeed we have a legend which has been many times appropriated, not only in Germany, but in the case of the Amazon queen who offered herself to Alexander, and, later again, of Agnes Sorel, who said to Charles the Seventh that she must needs love the strongest king in Christendom, and, as it was not he, she would seek him in England.

A contemporary of Gregory, Fortunatus,<sup>1</sup> who passed some years in Chilpéric's court, and wrote verses in honour of Siegbert, Brunhild, and Frédégonde, had known Boethius in Italy, and had profited by the encouragement shown to letters by Theodoric the Goth. He fled from Italy, his native country, before the invading Lombards, lived for some time in Austrasia, and finally settled at Poitiers. He had travelled much for a man of his time ; and his *impressions de voyage* crop up here and there in his writings. But, for the most part, he was a panegyrist in verse, exhausting the vocabulary of flattery on behalf of the cruel northern kings, whom he cannot but have hated and despised. Radegonde, having fled from the violence of her husband Clotaire, had founded a convent at Poitiers. With her and with the abbess Agnes, Fortunatus contracted what seems to have been a purely spiritual and intellectual intimacy. Based upon common tastes and mutual respect, the communion of these three—for it does not appear to have included a fourth—was adorned by a literature of its own. The best and most imaginative poems of Fortunatus are those which he addressed to his mother and sister. Nor was his influence on the barbarians who surrounded him inconsiderable. "To the fortune of a tranquillity unique in that age, the Italian exile added that of a fame which was not less unique ; and indeed he might well deceive himself as to the durability of that expiring literature

<sup>1</sup> Died about 609.

of which he was the last representative. The barbarians admired his slightest utterance, and did their best to enjoy his flashes of wit. The most meagre productions, letters written as he stood, whilst the messenger waited, simple couplets improvised at a meal, passed quickly from hand to hand, were read, copied, committed to memory. His religious poems, and copies of verse, addressed to the kings, attracted public attention.”<sup>1</sup> And with him, the literature which had its foundation in the reminiscences of the Latin classical writers, died; and the age of the sacred legends began. Of course there had been legends in the Church from its earliest days; legends written to be read during divine service, or on the celebration of the saints’ days, or even during an ordinary feast. But hitherto they had been overshadowed—or at least in our eyes they are overshadowed—by the works of the panegyrists, the poets, the historians, and the doctors; from the seventh century onwards they stand almost alone as the representatives of French literature. The Church, too, must have its literature; semi-profane, more attractive to the multitude than the sacred text and its commentaries; and this literature was found in the lives of the saints. No art or device of imagination was neglected by the writers who composed these holy legends, or by the ecclesiastics who availed themselves of them; and it would be a matter for surprise if we did not find them charged from beginning to end with miracles. Here also the romances of the Teutonic race found occasional welcome; for when once fiction is called in to the aid of fact, the less imaginative a writer happens to be, the more naturally will he have recourse to ideas already shaped and moulded. One hero of Germanic story, Walther of Aquitaine, is imported bodily into the lives of the saints. A certain legend relates how the valiant warrior, tired of his many exploits, withdrew to a monastery to spend there the

<sup>1</sup> A. Thierry, *Histoire des Gaulois*.

remainder of his days ; but the monastery being attacked by lawless men, the remembrance of his old valour returns to him ; and he seizes the sword in defence of himself and his friends. Little as there is of literary value in these legends of the Church, they have not been without their effect on modern literature ; for they have suggested and inspired some of the noblest productions of every succeeding age.

#### § 5. CHARLEMAGNE, HIS LABOURS AND HIS FELLOW-WORKMEN.

The history of France in the eighth century reveals a figure of greater prominence and importance than any of those upon whom we have been turning our attention. Karl the Great, commonly called Charlemagne, was the son of Pepin the Short, and grandson's son of Pepin of Héristal, an Austrasian Mayor of the Palace, who, after the battle of Testry, was acknowledged as Duke of the Franks. Charlemagne, born A.D. 742, succeeded his father in the kingdom of Neustria in 768, obtained the kingdom of all the Franks three years later, and the crown of Lombardy in 774 ; assuming the title of Emperor in the year 800. At the time of his death, in 814, his dominions were bounded by the ocean from north of the Elbe to the Pyrenees (always excepting Brittany). From the Bidassoa the boundary line ran across north-eastern Spain to the mouth of the Ebro, and thence followed the sea-coast to a point some miles south of Rome. Crossing Italy, it skirted the Adriatic as far as southern Dalmatia, and leaving Bulgaria on the east, ran westward round the Carpathians, and so north by Magdeburg to Jutland. Over this wide domain his sway was, throughout the latter part of his reign, undisputed ; and his authority, due as much to his commanding personal characteristics as to his success in arms, was superior both in kind and degree to that of any contemporary sovereign. He

did for France what Alfred did for England, but he was greater than the English king in the field, more influential in the court, and, let us add, more fortunate in the biographer who has transmitted his fame to succeeding generations.

Einhard (Eginhard),<sup>1</sup> who describes himself as "a barbarian little versed in the tongue of the Romans," was a chronicler endowed with something of the spirit of the panegyrists; but his *Life of Charlemagne* may be taken, with discrimination, as a valuable narrative of the acts of his illustrious patron; whilst it is undoubtedly superior in this respect to the spurious *Chronicle of Turpin*. Eginhard describes Karl the Great as tall of stature, with light hair, large and sparkling eyes, a rather long nose, a smiling and agreeable countenance, and very captivating manners. He was fond of war, and seems to have had little difficulty in collecting large and numerous armies, whom he almost invariably led to victory. He governed his court and his empire with remarkable skill. Twice a year, in spring and in autumn, he called together general assemblies, some consisting of the great officers and influential men in Church and State, together with men of inferior position; others being open to the superior class alone. The object of these assemblies was to deliberate and decide upon matters of national or local interest; and their results were preserved in the form of *Capitularies*, which, first instituted by Pepin the Short, contain rather the decrees and decisions than the legislation of the Carlovingian kings and their assemblies. Of these there are some hundred and fifty extant, whereof upwards of sixty belong to the reign of Charlemagne. The subjects dealt with in these Capitularies, which doubtless had all the force of a formal deposition of law, vary considerably from questions of morality to questions of politics, from penal and civil edicts to religious ordinances, and to regulations of domestic and social life.<sup>2</sup> By

<sup>1</sup> Born about 770. <sup>2</sup> Guizot, *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, Lect. 21



such means as these he held together and attempted to consolidate his widespread dominions, and made every province feel and acknowledge the validity of his sway. Not satisfied with a mere centralisation of his power, backed and supported by the tenor of his military authority, he maintained personal relations with all his principal subjects ; making his individuality weigh, through them, upon the most distant corners of his empire. Thus he strove, and with some success, to weld his Franks, Saxons, Avars, Goths, Italians, Aquitanians, Gauls, Iberians, into one homogeneous and harmonious nation ; and, if he failed, it was because the task was an utterly impossible one ; not because he omitted anything which a cultivated barbarian of the eighth century could have found to do.

It is interesting to note in what manner the individuality of Charlemagne impressed itself upon those with whom he came in contact. In one respect, that of clothing, he was himself an imitator of the original inhabitants of Gaul ; for his dress, as Eginhard describes it, partook both of the Frank and Gallic fashion. His long white or blue cloak hung over his shoulders, closed as far as the loins, where it separated into two parts, the one falling over the knees, the other and longer one flowing behind. The legs were clothed in cloth hose, laced down the sides, with trousers of the same material. Beneath the cloak was a tunic, edged with silk ; and beneath that a shirt of linen. A belt of gold or silver encircled the waist, from which hung, in its sheath of gold, the famous sword Joyeuse, which the troubadours of later days loved to celebrate, and which, like the Excalibur of King Arthur, boasted a fabulous origin. Over his shoulder Charlemagne was wont to wear a short mantle of marten or other skin ; a garment differing from the favourite adornment of his humblest subjects only in the costliness of its material.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor's courtiers were not slow in imitating and

<sup>1</sup> B. Haureau, *Charlemagne et sa cour*, ch. i.

even surpassing their master in the richness of their attire; and Charlemagne, disliking their ostentation, took an opportunity of effectually reproving it. One day he attended mass in an old cloak of sheepskin; and, as soon as the service was over, said to his attendants: "Let us not rust in idleness, but now, clad as we are, without returning to our houses, let us go a-hunting." There was no shirking such an invitation; so they mounted at once, and followed the Emperor. The sky was laden with rain, which presently fell in heavy showers. The courtiers were all clad in the best robes and gewgaws which the Venetian merchants had been able to supply. Some had their breasts covered with gay silks, set off by plumes of many colours, by peacock's feathers, and the heads and breasts of birds imported from Phœnicia. Others had robes of Tyrian purple, bordered with a fringe of cedar bark. Others wore quilted silks and cloths, or furs of every degree of value, from that of the dormouse to that of the marten. Charlemagne kept them at their sport throughout the day, until their dresses were completely soaked with rain, and torn to rags by the branches, the brambles, and thorns of the underwood. Nor did this end their unpleasant ordeal; for the Emperor commanded that they should attend his court on the following morning, attired precisely as they appeared on returning from the chase. He himself set the example by donning his sheepskin; and thus bantered at his ease the shamefaced counts and marquises who surrounded him.<sup>1</sup>

But our present concern with Charlemagne is not so much to recognise in him the conqueror, the imperial ruler, or even the administrator. It is of more interest that we should know him as the patron of art and science, the encourager of learning, himself a student and the friend of students. A man of war from his youth, he seems to have always nursed a sincere admiration for those who had conquered the difficulties of the

<sup>1</sup> See Teulet, *Œuvres complètes d'Eginhard*, vol. i. p. 32.

mind, as he had mastered the force and courage of his enemies. In one of his many expeditions he found himself, in Italy, in the presence of a number of learned men ; probably from Rome, or Pisa, or Bologna ; and, after listening to them, and treating them with great respect, he prevailed on several to return with him. He established schools, and monasteries to which schools were attached, in many parts of his dominions ; and settled lecturers, professors, artists, grammarians, wherever it occurred to him that their talents might be used to the best account. He also employed architects and engineers to erect places of worship and of education, or to build bridges and lay down roads. In this encouragement of learning and art, as in social life, Charlemagne succeeded, manifestly through his personal influence, through the contagion of his own enthusiasm, by co-operation rather than by command, by example rather than by direction. He learned to read and write long after he had reached the prime of manhood ; and all who wished to please their august master by treading in his steps felt no shame in sitting with him at the feet of his instructors. He coveted for himself the fame of a writer, and ordered a grammar of the national tongue to be written.<sup>1</sup> Whether or no this can be taken to imply that he began to write with his own hand, or by dictation, a treatise on the Frank language, it would be sufficiently to the credit of Charlemagne if he had done nothing more than suggest such a work to one of his friends.

A certain anonymous chronicler reports a story, reproduced by M. Guizot, which at least bears on its face the marks of probability. Returning from a long absence, Charlemagne summoned the pupils of one of the schools, and desired to see evidence of their application to study. The children of the poorest parents acquitted themselves

<sup>1</sup> Eginhard, *Vita Carolis Imperatoris*, c. xxix. ; “inchoavit et grammaticam patrii sermonis.”

well, whilst the better-born had nothing to show but a few mediocre attempts. Charlemagne set the former on his right hand and the latter on his left ; and, turning to the poor children with a beaming face, said : " My children, I praise you very much for your zeal in fulfilling my desires, and for seeking your own welfare by all the means in your power. Strive to attain perfection ; then I will give you rich bishoprics, splendid abbeys, and I will always esteem you as men worthy of consideration." Turning next, with marks of anger, to those whom he had placed on his left, who stood in terror at his wrathful look, he addressed them with bitter irony : " As for you, sons of the chief men in this nation, you delicate and well-born children, you resting content with your birth and your fortune, you have neglected my orders, and the pursuit of your own fame in your studies, and chosen to abandon yourself to softness, play, idleness, or vain occupations." Then, raising towards heaven his majestic head and his invincible arm, he cried in a voice of thunder : " By the King of the heavens, let others admire you ; I, for my part, make no account of your birth and your beauty. Know, and keep it well in your minds, that if you are not urgent to make up by constant application for your past negligence, you shall obtain nothing from Charles."<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the schools which owed their foundation, or rather restoration, to the enlightened Emperor at the close of the eighth century, was that attached to the palace, which some have chosen to consider as the origin of the famous University of Paris. No doubt when a University of Paris was formally established in the thirteenth century, the capital was already one of the principal seats of learning in the kingdom, and schools existed there with some sort of definite endowment ; but this is all that can safely be said. In any case Charlemagne did establish from the very best materials

<sup>1</sup> *Des Faits et Gestes de Charles le Grand*, book i.



at his command this school of the palace ; not assigning to it, in the first instance, any public building or fixed location, but entertaining its professors and learned men as his own guests, who travelled from place to place with his court, and only settled down in Paris as their permanent home when Charlemagne finally took up his abode in Aix-la-Chapelle. The names of his assistants in the grand work of the restoration of learning, and in particular of those who were attached to his person, sufficiently attest the penetration, the good fortune, the success with which he attracted to his side men of genuine intellectual power, well fitted to be the instruments of his far-sighted purposes. Of these the principal was Alcuin, who had presided over the famous school connected with the monastery of York. On his return from Rome, in 781, whither he had been sent to fetch the *pallium* of the newly-consecrated Archbishop Eanbald, he met Charlemagne at Parma, and was induced by the Emperor to come to Paris, in the capacity of his instructor and counsellor. Here Alcuin employed his time in revising sacred manuscripts, in collating texts of the Holy Scriptures, and generally, in presiding over the great educational movement which his patron had inaugurated. He had, amongst his immediate pupils in the palace school, not only Charlemagne himself, but his children, Charles, Pepin, Louis, Gisla ; his sister Gisla ; Riculf and Rigbold, afterwards archbishops of Mayence and of Treves ; Adalhard, Angilbert, Flavius, Damoëtas, and Eginhard, friends and counsellors of the Emperor ; Gundrade the sister of Adalhard, and Richtrude a nun.<sup>1</sup> There are extant a number of letters which Alcuin wrote to Charlemagne during their temporary separations, and from the different places where the first was engaged in the labours which he had undertaken. In one of these, written from Tours—where the Emperor had given him the abbey of St. Martin—he gives his patron an account of what he had been

<sup>1</sup> Guizot, *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*. Lect. 22.

doing in that town for the school attached to the abbey. He says—

“I, your Flavius, according to your exhortation and wise desire, have been busy under the roof of Saint Martin, in dispensing to some the honey of the Holy Scriptures. Others I strive to inebriate with the old wine of ancient studies; these I nourish with the fruit of grammatical knowledge; in the eyes of these again I seek to make bright the courses of the stars. . . . But I have need of the most excellent books of scholastic learning, which I had procured in my own country, either by the devoted care of my master, or by my own labours. I therefore beseech your majesty that it may please your wisdom to permit me to send certain of our household to bring over into France the flowers of Britain. . . . In the morning of my life I sowed in Britain the seeds of knowledge; now, in the evening, although my blood has grown cool, I do not cease to sow them in France; and I trust that, with the favour of God, they will prosper in both lands.”<sup>1</sup>

A couple of years later, Alcuin, having written to Charlemagne an explanation of the terms “septuagesima” and “sexagesima,” and having been gently remonstrated with by the Emperor upon his unyielding adherence to his own opinion, rejoins as follows:—“With regard to the injunction which you give me at the close of your letter, in a friendly way, and for my good—that if there be aught needing qualification in my opinion, I should qualify it with humility—I thank God I have never been obstinate in my error, nor confident in my disposition. I can advance with ease to a better counsel, for I know how it has been said that one ought more frequently to employ one’s ears than one’s tongue. I therefore pray your wisdom to think I write not as to a disciple but as to a judge, and that I address to him my humble thoughts, not as to one who is ignorant, but as to one who may correct.” A pleasant

<sup>1</sup> See Guizot’s *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, for specimens of Alcuin’s lessons, and of many of his letters.

touch of nature on both sides, doing credit to the independence of each, at the same time that it betrays the assertion and the recognition of Charlemagne's imperious character.

Two of Alcuin's fellow-workmen were from Ireland ; the monkish chronicler of St. Gall describes them as "*duos Scotos de Hibernia.*" They seem to have come of their own accord, and to have conceived the idea of pressing upon France the learning of which they felt her to be in need, and which they felt themselves capable of imparting. It was their custom for some time to collect a crowd about them, much in the same way that is now practised by a mountebank at a fair. "If any one wishes for knowledge," they would proclaim, "let him come to us and take it, for we have it on sale." Charlemagne gave them a welcome at his court. Clement, one of them, was a Greek scholar, but he has left nothing behind him, except memorials of the hatred in which he was held by Theodulf, a Spaniard, bishop of Orleans, whom his friends called Pindar, because he was a poet. For some reason or other he had conceived a fierce antipathy to Clement,<sup>1</sup> and called him "*Scottus Sotus*;" but Clement nevertheless seems to have been a hearty co-operator with Alcuin, and to have commanded the respect of his pupils, if not of all his colleagues. It is possible enough that the Irishman's orthodoxy did not precisely attain the standard of that of a Spaniard.

Another Irishman, greater than either Alcuin or Clement, lived at the court of Charles the Bald (grandson of Charlemagne through Louis le Débonnaire). This was John Scotus Erigena, who has been called the only really learned man of

<sup>1</sup> Theodulf wrote the following Latin verses upon Clement, which bear testimony to his hatred :—

*Res dira, hostis atrox, hebes horror, pestis acerba,*

*Litigiosa lues, res fera, grande nefas ;*

*Res fera, res turpis, res segnis, resque nefanda,*

*Res infesta piis ; res inimica bonis.*

the Middle Ages. Others of Alcuin's contemporaries in France were Smaragdus, who wrote a Latin grammar; Benedict of Aniane, a terror to evil-living monks; Peter of Pisa, brought by the Emperor from Pavia; Paul the Lombard, who has left behind him a *History of the Lombards*, a *Chronicle of Events* at Metz, and a continuation of the *Abstract of Eutepius*; and Paulinus of Aquileia, a theologian of no little acuteness and independence. Of Eginhard we have already heard something. He was one of Alcuin's pupils, and has left us the most trustworthy account of Charlemagne, having probably been one of the Emperor's chancellors, and subsequently the tutor and chief minister of Lothaire, associated by Louis le Débonnaire in his government. As a man of letters Eginhard was infinitely superior to Gregory of Tours, though as a historian he ranks below him.

It is to be observed that the civilisation of France during the epoch of Charlemagne and his immediate successors, and, in a still more remarkable degree, the learning and literary culture of France, came from men of foreign extraction. The influences of Christianity had been brought to bear upon the nation by modes and instruments for the most part indigenous, but this restoration of learning in the eighth and ninth centuries must be attributed to causes of external origin. "Before Charlemagne almost all the countries of Western Europe were more advanced than France, and it may be said without national vanity such a state of things was a real anomaly in the history of civilisation. Nevertheless so it was in the epoch of barbarism and the decadence of the Merovingians. At that time France was eclipsed by Spain, by Italy, by England. Spain had, in the tenth century, Isidore of Seville. In Italy, after Boetius and Cassiodorus, those latest representatives of antiquity at the moment when antiquity had expired on the threshold of modern ages, two great Popes



arose, Saint Leo and Saint Gregory. Later on, whilst the densest darkness covered Gaul, England produced the Venerable Bede, celebrated by the extent of his knowledge. France had no one to compare with these.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ampère, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. iii. ch. 4.

## BOOK II.

### FEUDAL SOCIETY.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. ORIGIN OF THE *LANGUE D'OC* AND THE *LANGUE D'OÏL*.

THE process whereby the Latin tongue gradually became modified into French was slow and ill defined. Our information upon this point, at all events such as is derived from external evidence, is little more satisfactory than that which relates to the superposition of Latin upon the Gallic and Iberian languages which it displaced. But we have sufficient evidence that the Latin spoken in France during and shortly previous to the eighth century was very corrupt.<sup>1</sup> Even in the age of Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, we have his word for it that it was very common to confound the genders, the government of prepositions, and other grammatical rules. Nevertheless there was of course a method in every modification which did not spring from the mere neglect of ignorant men; therefore they who treat the transition language of the French as a jargon speak without a notion of what it really was.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 752, for instance, Pope Zacharias found himself called on to decide concerning the validity of a baptism pronounced in these terms:—"Ego te baptizo in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti." A form of contract of about the same date is couched in the following words:—"Cedo tibi de rem paupertatis mea tam pro sponsalia quam pro legitimitate tua, hoc est vasa cum curte circumstantia, mobilis et immobilia. Cedo tibi bracte valente solidus tantus;" and so forth.

<sup>2</sup> Littré, *Histoire de la langue française*.

Of the methods which undoubtedly regulated these linguistic changes, one of the most important and manifest was the euphonic law of accentuation. It has been justly said that,<sup>1</sup> "considered in its form as compared with the Latin, and in its origin, I would define French as a language which adheres to the accentuated syllables, usually suppressing the intermediate consonant and the short vowel, which then re-constructs the word according to the euphony demanded by the ear amongst the letters remaining, and which thus establishes its new and distinct accentuation, resting, in a masculine termination, upon the final syllable, and in a feminine termination upon the penultimate."<sup>2</sup>

The influence of the Franks in this respect was, as we have already seen, very slight, being perceived rather in certain additions to the vocabulary than in any organic modification.<sup>3</sup>

It has been asserted that traces of this new-born tongue are to be discovered as early as the sixth century.<sup>4</sup> The fact is doubtful, not because the evidences were not present at that date, but because we possess no literary documents of the sixth century written in the most popular forms of speech then employed.<sup>5</sup> In France, as in all contemporary Christian

<sup>1</sup> Littré, *Histoire de la langue française*.

<sup>2</sup> Bearing this law of accentuation in mind, we may say that the great modifying force of neo-Latin in France was the law of crasis. Many examples will at once suggest themselves. Thus, *solicitare* becomes *soucier*; *ministerium* becomes *mestier*; *cogitare*, *cuidere*; *cupiditare*, *convoiter*; *securus*, *seur*, *sûr*; *maturus*, *meur*, *mûr*; and the like.

<sup>3</sup> From them we have such feudal terms as *mall* (*mahal*), *ban* (*bann*), *alleu* (*alûd*), *échevin* (*skepeno*), *maréchal* (*marahscalh*), *sénéchal* (*siniscalh*); and terms of war, like *haubert* (*halsberc*), *heaume* (*helm*), *guerre* (*werra*), and the like. But, in tracing the rise of the new language, the Teutonic element would scarcely require more than a few passing words of comment.

<sup>4</sup> The Benedictine authors of the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. vii. p. xxxiii.

<sup>5</sup> There is, however, a fragment known as the *Gloss of Reichenau*, brought to light in 1863, which is at all events as old as the days of Charlemagne, of which a few words may serve as a specimen. Thus we have from the Latin

lands, the Bible has been the handmaid of literature, and has had a large influence on the formation of the modern tongue.

The Latin spoken in the ninth century by the most educated laymen in France—setting aside those who had spent many years in the schools—is exemplified by the well-known oaths of Lewis the German and Charles the Bald, preserved by Nithard, nephew of Charlemagne, in his *History of the Franks*.<sup>1</sup> Here we have evidence both of the extent to which the corruption of the Latin language had proceeded, and of the advance already made towards the modern form of speech. Another and later example is contained in the song of St. Eulalia,<sup>2</sup> preserved by Ordericus Vitalis, one of the earliest fragments of the popular poetry, afterwards so abundant, which centred round the lives of the saints, and which was to give place in the affections of the French people to the songs of the troubadours.

The distinction between the early French of the north and the south must have existed from the very first; and it is necessary, to a proper appreciation of French literature, to

text of the Bible the word *minas*, upon which the gloss given is *manatees*, the modern French *menaces*; and so, *galea, helmo* (*jeaurme*); *tugurium, cabanna*, (*cabane*); *singulariter, solamente* (*seulement*); *camentarii, macioni* (*maçons*); *sindones, lincioi* (*linceuls*), etc. Brachet, *Histoire de la Langue Française*, p. 34.

<sup>1</sup> The oath of Lewis the German, taken before the army of Charles the Bald in 842, is as follows:—"Pro Deo amur et pro Christian poble et nostro comun salvament, dist di en avant, in quant Deus savir et podir me dunat, si salvarai eo cist meon fradre Karlo et in adjudha et in cadhuna cosa, si cum om per dreit son fradra salvar dift, in o quid il mi altresi fazet, et ab Ludher nul plaid nunquam prindrai qui, meon vol, cist meon fradre Karle in danno sit." The oath of the French lords of the army of Charles the Bald is as follows:—"Si Lodhuwigs sagrament, que son fradre Karlo jurat conservat, et Karlus meos sendra, de suo part non lo stanit, si io returnar non l'int pois, ne io ne neuls cui eo returnar int pois in nulla adjudha contra Lodhuwig non li iv er."

<sup>2</sup> We give the four first lines only, with the modern French on the other side:—

Buona pulella fut Eulalia;  
Bel avret corps, bellezour anima  
Voldrent la veindre li Deo mini,  
Voldrent la faire diaule servir.

Bonne puelle fut Eulalie,  
Beau avrit le corps, plus belle l'âme,  
Voulurent la vainere les eunemis de Dieu,  
Voulurent la faire le diable servir.



notice the principal features of each form of language. As early as the thirteenth century, French writers had observed and commented on this difference. The grammarian and troubadour, Raymond Vidal, in his *La Dreyta Manera de Trobar*,<sup>1</sup> remarks : "The French tongue is best and most suitable for the making of romances, pastorals, and lays ; but that of Limousin is to be preferred for making verses, songs, and sirventes."<sup>2</sup> Of course there were various kinds of dialects spoken in different parts of the country long before the thirteenth century ; but the exact process by which they attained their first literary form and their geographical limits cannot be satisfactorily explained. It would be as rash to conclude that the Latin tongue gave place to a uniform idiom throughout France, which was subsequently corrupted in different districts, as it would be to suppose that the French of Aquitaine was simply Latin *plus* Iberian, the French of Auvergne Latin *plus* Gaelic, the French of Armorica Latin *plus* Cymric. Yet there is little doubt but that the original tongues of Gaul had their share in directing the several corruptions of the adopted Latin ; although the traces of this influence are not much more distinct than the traces of Teutonic admixture. Many causes must have contributed to produce the dialects of Limousin, Gascony, and Saintonge, of Auvergne, Toulouse, Narbonne, of Vienne and Montferrat ; and the dialects themselves, in a more or less imperfect form, must have been commonly spoken in the various provinces many years before they became the vehicle of literature. The same thing was happening at the same time—perhaps somewhat later—in England, although under other conditions, and according to more definite or ascertained laws of linguistic development ;

<sup>1</sup> "The right way to write poetry."—Guessard, *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*.

<sup>2</sup> In *Les Troubadours et leur influence sur la littérature du Midi de l'Europe*, M. E. Baret suggests that the romances, lays, and above all the pastorals, are of Provençal origin.

the older continental forms giving way before the popular dialects, out of which the genius of the early writers of romance was to evolve the modern English tongue.

It is certain, as it is of course very natural, that the corrupted Latin of Italy and of Spain ran for a long time side by side with the corrupted Latin of France ; that the forms of corruption were frequently identical ; and more, that some forms which were in the first instance common to all the neo-Latin tongues, have come to be adopted in one of those countries, whilst they have been rejected in the others.<sup>1</sup> Thus the *lingua romana rustica* was formed between the sixth and seventh centuries. In the latter century we hear of a Life of Saint Faro, written in a popular form of speech, so as to be understood as widely as possible.<sup>2</sup> Paschatus Radbert tells us, in his Life of Adalhard (about 800), that "if you had heard him speak in the common tongue, he uttered his words in pleasantly-flowing periods ; whereas if you heard him use the foreign tongues, which they called Teutsch . . . he excelled all others ; but if he spoke Latin, then was there no grander diction from the charm of its sweetness. Here we have a mention of three forms of speech, one of which is described as commonly spoken ; and being neither Teutsch nor Latin

<sup>1</sup> In Diez's *Introduction to the Grammar of the Romance Languages*, we find "the two Romance dialects of Gaul, the French and the Provencal, have been produced from nearly the same materials ; and the characteristics which the former possesses, in common with the Spanish and Italian, are not of a nature to separate it from its neighbour, to which it bears a very intimate relationship. It is conceivable that within certain limitations the same Romance language reigned at one time over the whole of Gaul. This language preserved itself with more purity in the Provencal than in the French, which from somewhere about the ninth century has been separating itself thence by a gradual attrition of its forms." Burguy, in his introduction to the *Grammaire de la Langue d'Oïl*, p. 13, says also, "Il est très probable, grammaticalement parlant, qu'il y eut d'abord dans les Gaules une seule et même langue, avec des nuances diverses toute fois selon les localités. Dès la fin du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle nous y trouvons deux langues fort distinctes ; le *Provencal* au sud, et le *Français* proprement dit au nord."

<sup>2</sup> "Juxta rusticitatem" is the epithet applied.

was evidently the *lingua romana* in use by the majority of Frenchmen. In 813 the Council of Tours directed the clergy to employ the rustic Latin, which we may call Romance, alternately with the Teutsch. The former was, of course, the most widely understood language in France in the ninth century; and as such, it was employed on all occasions when the intelligence of the masses was to be reached. It became divided, as we have seen, into two dialectic families, that of the north being still further subdivided, and comprising one particular form, spoken in the Ile de France, which, as being the language of the capital and the court, was destined ultimately to prevail over all the rest.

The grand distinction observable amongst the dialects of France is that between the north and the south; and for this the geographical separation would alone be sufficient to account. But there were other causes at work, both political and social. The descent of the Norsemen upon the north, during the tenth century, must have produced an immediate effect in modifying the speech of the conquered country; for though the victors doubtless adopted the language of those whom they had to rule, they certainly did not do so without considerably modifying it. They neglected the accentuation, they changed the vowel-sounds,—in particular turning the *a* into *é*, as in *charitat*, *charité*; and they must, in like manner, have altered the features of the tongue which they adopted in sundry more or less conspicuous modes. The south of France, on the other hand, occupied a few centuries previously by the Visigoths and Burgundians, the most peaceful of all the eastern<sup>1</sup> invaders, became united from the year 879 under Boson, King of Provence, or of Arles, as he was sometimes described; whilst at the end of the eleventh century it was

<sup>1</sup> “Quem si *vulgo* audisses, dulcissimus emanabat; si vero idem *barbara, quam Teutiscam* dicunt . . . præ-eminebat; quod si *latine*, jam ulterius præaviditate dulcoris non erat spiritus.”—Pertz.

divided between the Counts of Toulouse and Barcelona. These changes were made without much bloodshed or resistance; and this fact, added to the natural influences of a more southern climate, tended to widen and emphasise the difference between the Provençal language and literature and the heavier and ruder speech of the north. The former has been distinguished by the name of *langue d'oc*; the latter by that of *langue d'oïl*.<sup>1</sup>

Between the more warlike, yet the more barbarous, Frenchmen of the North and the softer yet more ingenious Frenchmen of the South, there arose a certain rivalry and jealousy, which has been manifested in the political history of subsequent generations: and which has left its marks upon the social history and literature of the Middle Ages. When, in the year 1006, Constance, daughter of the Count of Toulouse, came to be given in marriage to Robert the Second, King of France, and brought with her certain of her father's courtiers, the rude men from the North were scandalised by the frivolity of the Southerners. "Their arms," says the chronicler Glaber,<sup>2</sup> "and the trappings of their horses are extremely quaint. Their hair falls barely to the middle of their heads, they shave their beards like players, wear boots ending unbecom-

<sup>1</sup> M. Gérusez in his *Histoire de la Littérature française*, vol. i., p. 5, remarks that "*oc* is evidently the *hoc* of the Latins; *oïl*, of which we have formed our *oui*, which is certainly not, as has been said so often, the past participle of the verb *ouir*, is derived, by a double syncope, from *hoc* and *illud*, united and abridged. *Hoc* was pronounced *o*, as *oc* is still pronounced in the south of France. *Illud* has given its first syllable, upon which the tonic accent rests, and our fathers had thus for affirmation the dissyllable *oïl*, which is wrongly written and pronounced *oïl*. The Italians took for a similar use the adverb *sic*, of which they made *sì*. Italian is the language of *sì*, just as the romance from the south is the language of *oc*, and that from the centre and the north of France the language of *oïl*."

<sup>2</sup> Raoul Glaber, a monk who died towards 1050, in the monastery of Cluny, wrote a *Chronique*, which contains the most memorable events from 900 until 1046. A translation of this chronicle has been published in the collection of *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de France*, edited by the late M. Guizot.



ingly in a curved beak, short skirts down to their knees, and open behind and before. They never walk without springing. Perpetual wranglers, they never act in good faith. And these are the frightful models which the princess has unfortunately offered to Frenchmen, the most honest and refined of all nations!" The picture is one which bears on its face the stamp of truth; and the French literature of the Middle Ages is marked by the same contrast as their social history.

We pass on to consider the nature of this literature, as it sprang to life in the eleventh century; when the pure Latin tongue was no longer spoken, when the labours of Charlemagne and Alcuin had almost ceased to bear fruit, save in the monastic schools, and when the whole of western Europe stood upon the verge of a new historic epoch. And we will begin with the literature of the *langue d'oc*, the literature of the south of France.

## § 2. THE *LANGUE D'OC* AND ITS LITERATURE.

The language of the South, distinguished from its greater propinquity to Rome as the *langue d'oc* (*hoc*), was spoken generally up to the close of the thirteenth century on the banks of the Ebro and of the Po, on the Mediterranean coast, and in the districts drained by the Loire and the Rhone. Its principal variations were the dialects of Provence, Gascony, Catalonia, and Piedmont; the latter comprising elements which account for its development into the modern Italian, whilst the Catalan dialect tended towards the modern Spanish. In the twelfth century these four forms were sufficiently similar to be intelligible over the whole district just defined, and even by the more cultivated speakers of the *langue d'oïl*. Many of the troubadours employed the several dialects indiscriminately, and we shall find them frequently combining the features

of all in the same song. Although we are concerned now simply with the literature of France, it is well to bear in mind that this brilliant lyric poetry of the Middle Ages belongs virtually to at least three nationalities, and that the political aspect of the country of the *troubadours* was considerably more varied than it is in the present day.

South of the Pyrenees were the kingdoms of Navarre and Aragon, independent and compact. During the greater part of the twelfth century Aragon held Provence as a fief, until, in 1196, the latter was made over to a younger brother of the reigning king, and from his successor it passed into the hands of the Capets. Provence lay on the Mediterranean, between the Alps and the Rhone. Its neighbour on the north was the duchy of Savoy; on the west, extending between the Rhone and the upper Garonne, and between the Pyrenees and the mountains of Auvergne, was the Count of Toulouse, whereof the ruling family was closely allied, by successive marriages, with the royal house of Aragon. Westward of Toulouse, in the south-west corner of France, came the Duchy of Gascony, including Béarn in the south, Périgord in the north, Albret on the west, and Agenois on the east. North of Gascony and Toulouse was the extensive duchy of Aquitaine, comprising Auvergne, Limousin, Poitou, and La Marche. All these French provinces paid fealty to the French king who reigned in Paris, though they preserved a certain amount of independence, at least to the time of Louis IX.,<sup>1</sup> eighth in direct descent from Hugh Capet.

The history of France, and of the south in particular, during the Capetian period is full of interest, and of course it had no little influence on the literature of the *langue d'oc*. In 1095 Pope Urban, assisted by Peter the Hermit, both of them being Frenchmen, preached the first crusade from Clermont in Auvergne. Since the death of Hildebrand, ten years

<sup>1</sup> 1226-1229.

before, the power of the papacy had been declining, and the Emperors of Germany contested the supremacy of the Pontiff, who was moreover continually liable to be thwarted by the headstrong independence of the feudal barons. For these and other reasons Urban determined to make a diversion which should bring him more prominently forward as the head of Christendom, and he therefore took steps to carry out a project which had long found a place in the counsels of Rome. He had well chosen the spot from which to move the hearts of the Christian warriors of France; for it was the adhesion of Bishop Adhémar of Puy and Raymond de Saint Gilles, Count of Toulouse, which assured the success of the crusade. The hatred of the Saracens in Europe stimulated men's enthusiasm against the Saracens of the Holy Land; but it was no doubt rather policy than religious fervour which caused Urban and his advisers to embark upon this important enterprise. And the first fruits of his success was the expulsion of Henry IV. of Germany from Italy by the Norman and Burgundian host which came to crave the blessing of the Pontiff. Amongst the followers of Raymond, who formed the finest army in the whole crusade, were not only his own subjects, but a large number of Gascons, Aquitanians, and Provençals. Although amongst the effects of the crusades must be placed the increased immorality of western Europe, and the enormous strengthening of the hands of the Popes, it is also to be remembered that men were, by their agency, brought more closely together, caste was broken down, feudalism was prevented from degenerating into anarchy, the conditions of serfdom were alienated, and the municipalities, left in a large degree to their own devices, gained in power and authority.

Civic liberties made a large stride in the reign of Louis VII.;<sup>1</sup> and indeed the general immunity enjoyed by southern France from the long and devastating wars which had

<sup>1</sup> 1137-1180.

afflicted each and all of the neighbouring countries had brought, especially to Provence, much prosperity, leisure, and literary culture in its train. The art of poetry, above all, flourished in a remarkable manner, and the central districts of the *langue d'oc* became a veritable land of song. By about the year 1160, Henry of Anjou, Henry II. of England, became master of the greater part of southern France. He had acquired Poitou and Aquitaine by his marriage with Eleanor, divorced wife of Louis; Touraine and Maine had, together with Anjou, been his original patrimony; he had feudal suzerainty over Auvergne; he conquered Gascony, and seized upon Quercy from the Count of Toulouse; but all this had been done with comparatively little fighting, and the country at large was never greatly disturbed by him. The cruel war waged against the Albigenses, wherein the greater part of Languedoc was laid waste, Béziers, Arles, Narbonne, Avignon, were sacked; wherein Pedro of Arragon, an enlightened patron of letters, fell at Muret<sup>1</sup> with 18,000 of his followers, destroyed the delicate literary southern efflorescence; but the records of at least a couple of centuries remain to show the splendour and importance of the epoch.

Striking figures are those who stand prominent in the history of southern France during the thirteenth century. The philosophical Albigenses, whose head-quarters were at Toulouse but who were spread over a wide district, and whose disciples numbered many thousands; the ascetic Waldenses, the "poor men of Lyons," who would not go beyond the Bible for the rule of their faith—these two sects, against whom all the bitterness of orthodox hatred was to be poured forth, alike distinguished for the purity of their life, and alike rejected by the priestly domination of Rome; Folquet, the false and unscrupulous Bishop of Toulouse, himself once a gay and gallant troubadour, who, with his culture of the poetic

<sup>1</sup> 1213.



art, had cast off all the grace and tenderness of humanity ; Domenico, canon of Osma, the parent and founder of the inquisition, who baptized his offspring in the blood of a thousand victims, and did more than any one man of his generation for the cause of Roman supremacy ; Raymond VI., Count of Toulouse, excommunicated by the Pope,<sup>1</sup> formidable to Rome by the indifference with which he regarded her denunciations of his heretic subjects, weak and vacillating, first resisting the pressure brought to bear upon him, then yielding himself as a tool in the hands of the persecutors ; his gallant nephew, the Viscount of Béziers, opposing the emissaries of Rome by word and deed, until his hapless capital was taken by storm, sacked and consumed by fire, the very last of its inhabitants was killed, and he himself, previously lured into the besiegers' camp, done to death by the basest treachery ; Simon de Montfort, succeeding to the honours of his victim, taking henceforth the leading part in this cruel mockery of a crusade ;—these are figures worthy the skill of a great painter, grouped as they are in lurid light against the dark background which, in the thirteenth century, began to overlay the land of song.

Turn from the theatre of war to the stage of peaceful everyday life, and the actors who first attract our notice are scarcely less noteworthy. “When Monseigneur the Bishop of Cahors,” writes a chronicler, “takes possession of his see, the Viscount of Saissac, his principal vassal, ought to await him at the gate of the town bareheaded, his right leg naked, and his right foot in a slipper. He ought to take the bridle of Monseigneur's mule, and lead him to the episcopal palace. While Monseigneur dines, the Viscount ought to wait on him, his head being still uncovered and his right foot naked ; and after dinner, the lord of Saissac is to take the sideboard, which must be of silver gilt, and, putting it on a mule, go his way—

<sup>1</sup> 1207.

both mule and sideboard (the value whereof was fixed at three thousand livres) becoming his own in right of his service. It is told of one Bishop of Cahors that he never said mass without a sword or a pair of gauntlets being laid beside the altar. Another ecclesiastic of Provence claimed the right of mixing with the choir in boots and spurs, his sword by his side, and a hawk on his wrist. The Abbot of Figeac was entitled to be led into the principal town of his see by the lord of Montbrun dressed like a harlequin, save that one of his legs should be naked. These ceremonies were not more fantastic than the tricks which knights and troubadours dignified by the name of the proprieties, and the immorality covered by such a grotesque conventionality was as unsatisfactory in the one case as in the other. Gregory VII., writing of France in 1074, says that "law is forgotten and justice trampled under foot. There is no kind of infamy or cruelty, no act, however vile or intolerable, that is not perpetrated with impunity . . . by sacrilegious, incestuous, and perjured men, who are ready to betray one another for the veriest trifle." The vices described and hinted at by contemporary historians are such as it would, in the present age, be unclean to put to paper. The country of the Albigenses and Waldenses did not escape the general contagion; but we can at least claim for it that it was less corrupt than the remainder of France. The troubadours refined and attenuated vice; they covered it with a delicate fretwork of etiquette and fastidiousness, but, at the same time they repudiated its brutality; they ate the honey of indulgence, but they did not devour the comb. The evils of vice, as of war, singed but did not blacken them; they were the void heart of the flame which, consuming their neighbours, left them comparatively unscathed. Provence was the focus of the lyrical poetry of the *langue d'oc*, and from its troubadours of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries

spring almost every form of lyrical prosody known to modern Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The literature of southern France in the Middle Ages is the more worthy of study, because it was in many ways a revival of the tone and spirit of the culture displayed by the Gallo-Romans of an earlier age. The refinement of the panegyrists, the literary elegance of a Sidonius relived in the words of the modern Aquitanians and Provençals, who inherited the delicate ear and tongue, the fastidious and discriminative minds of the patrician families who so long resisted, but finally accepted and coalesced with, the Visigoths. There can be no question whatever that the poetry of the troubadours was a flower of indigenous growth, matured and brought to perfection by the same developing influences which had nourished the general civilisation of the south, and had accumulated the commercial prosperity and luxury of towns like Arles, Toulouse, Narbonne, Bordeaux. But, if this poetry was indigenous, if it even extended its influence over northern

<sup>1</sup> The troubadours had the *canson* or *chanson*, consisting of from half-a-dozen to a score of stanzas, all cast in the same mould, and invariably ending with a *commiato* or *envoi*, apostrophising the song, and delivering the mission which it was sent forth to fulfil; the more lax and satirical *sirvente*, with lines and stanzas of varying length, the succession of rhymes being similarly optional; the *sonnet*, originally always chanted to the sound of a musical instrument—hence the name, and one form whereof may possibly have suggested to Petrarch that which he definitely adopted; the *ballad*, sung during the dance. With them also originated many whimsicalities of poetry—the *macaronic*, alternating from language to language, either line by line or verse by verse—a style which Dante himself did not disdain to imitate; the *frottola*, a mere amalgam of proverbs and familiar maxims, strung together with rhyme and metre, but with very little reason. They attuned their voices to the *predicansas*, inciting their hearers to the dangers and glories of the crusades; to the *planhs*, or complaints against fate, or the cruelties of their mistresses; to the *tensons*, characterised by the ingenious replies of a pair of lovers; to the *abbas* (*aubades*), the morning songs of nature's beauty and freshness; to the *screnas* (*sérénades*), in which they invited to the tenderness of love. They even attempted, in their *tesours* (*trésors*) and *ensenhamens* (*enseignements*) to give expression to what little they knew of the wonders of science, the rules of philosophy, the art of living.

Italy and north-eastern Spain, leaving an ineffaceable mark on the literatures of these two countries, it does not appear that the Provençals modified in any appreciable degree the literature of the north of France. We have heard that Raymond Vidal, himself a troubadour and a grammarian, claimed a "superior authority" for the "songs in the Limousin tongue;" but he did not for a moment pretend that the trouvères were indebted to the troubadours for any part of their inspiration, nor that the *Chansons de Geste* and *fabliaux* re-echoed the spirit of the *cançons* and *sirventes*. Neither is there much ground for attributing any more than a general and necessary influence in succeeding generations to the Provençal models over the literature of northern France. It is true that the criticism of a later age has claimed this superiority and this influence for the south, one writer going so far as to speak of the "transplantation of the taste for Provençal poetry into France" as early as the beginning of the eleventh century. But a more recent examination has brought the conviction that the northern literature was itself also in the truest sense indigenous; that there were, as early as the eleventh century, songs in northern France which had long been popular; and that, on the other hand, Romance epics are to be found in the south which must unquestionably have derived their inspiration from the Arthurian *Chansons de Geste* of the north. It would be very difficult to determine which of the two great branches of French poetic literature in the Middle Ages ought to stand first, either in point of origin or authority, or even literary value. It is perhaps sufficient to acknowledge the beauty, the genuineness, the national importance of each; to observe how naturally each of them was the outcome and representative of distinct conditions of civilisation and history; and to trace, as we proceed, the action and reaction of both upon the later literature of united France.



## § 3. THE TROUBADOURS.

We are about to find in the poetry of the Troubadours a reflection of the age which they have made so memorable ; and it is well that we should observe in what degree these poets were suited to become the interpreters between their own day and the generations which have succeeded it. It is clear that the song of a troubadour who was himself the lord of a wide estate must differ considerably from the song of a wandering minstrel, whose poetic gift and guitar were almost his sole possessions. We find, indeed, that the troubadours came from every stage and rank of feudal society ; and as their habits and experiences greatly varied, so also varies the character of their songs. One of the very earliest of the troubadours was Guillaume IX., Count of Poitiers.<sup>1</sup> Poitou, Saintonge, and Guyenne were especially the homes of noble and wealthy poets, to whom the making and singing of verses was but the recreation of their leisure moments.<sup>2</sup> In Gascony and in Auvergne the gift and the fashion were more largely present ; and there the citizens of the towns, the very working-men themselves, were cultivators of the *gaie science*. Thus we find Elias de Barjols,<sup>3</sup> the son of a shopkeeper, towards the middle of the twelfth century, disputing with Geoffroy Rudel, Prince of Blayes,<sup>4</sup> the palm of verse and courtesy. In Auvergne were born Pierre d'Auvergne<sup>5</sup> and Pierre Rogier, sprung from the people, whose names are immortalised by Petrarch in his *Trionfo d'Amore*. Giraud de Borneilh,<sup>6</sup> Bernard de Ventadour,<sup>7</sup> Gaucelm Faydit,<sup>8</sup> were

<sup>1</sup> 1071-1127.

<sup>2</sup> According to Diez, *Introduction to the Grammar of the Romance Languages*, "Poitou, though the home of the ancient troubadours, does not belong to the Provençal dialect. From the time that it belonged to France, 1276, the *langue d'oïl* spread more and more."

<sup>3</sup> 1180.

<sup>4</sup> 1140-1170.

<sup>5</sup> 1214.

<sup>6</sup> 1175-1220.

<sup>7</sup> 1130-1195.

<sup>8</sup> 1190-1240.

humble troubadours of Périgord; which at the same time produced the noble-born Canon Guy d'Uisel and his cousin Elias,<sup>1</sup> and perhaps the loftiest genius of Provençal poetry, Arnaud Daniel,<sup>2</sup> who dignified the fashion of verse, and would, if that were possible, have made it the appanage of the refined and learned. But one of the noblest and most warlike troubadours of Périgord, Bertrand de Born, lord of Hautefort, must not be forgotten here. He supported the pretensions of the youthful prince Henry, youngest son of Henry II. of England, to the Duchy of Aquitaine, both by the sword and by his poetry, inciting the Provençal nobles to form a league in defence of the young prince's right. When the latter died he wrote the following touching complaint:—<sup>3</sup>

“If all the sorrow, and tears  
And mourning, and grief and regret,  
Which men suffer in this sad century,  
Were united, they would seem too light  
For the death of this young English prince,  
Whose loss saddens merit and honour,  
And covers with a dark veil  
The world, deprived of joy and full of grief.  
Sad, and mournful, and full of sorrow  
The brave soldiers remain,  
The troubadours and the pleasant *jongleurs*;  
They have in death a very cruel enemy,  
For she takes away from them the young English king,  
Compared to whom the most generous seemed miserly.

<sup>1</sup> 1223.<sup>2</sup> 1160.<sup>3</sup> We give the first couplet in the original, taken from Raynonard, *Choix des poésies des Troubadours*, vol. iv.

“Si tut li do lor e'l plor marrimen  
E las dolors e'l dan e'l caitivier  
Que hom agues en est segle dolen  
Fosson ensems, semblaran tut leugier  
Contra la mort del jove rei Engles  
Don reman pretz e jovent doloiros  
E'l mon escurs e ténhs e tenebros,  
Sem de tot joi, plen de tristor e d'ira.

Never for such an evil  
 Will there be sadness and tears enough . . .  
 From this cowardly age, full of trouble,  
 If love goes away, I hold its happiness for deceptive,  
 For there is nothing which does not turn to suffering.  
 Every day you will see, that to-day is worth less than yesterday.  
 Let each look at oneself in the young English king,  
 Who in this world was the most valiant of the brave :  
 Now is gone his gentle loving heart,  
 And (there) remains for our misfortune discomfort and sadness."

De Born continued to wage war against Richard Cœur de Lion, and to write in favour of the Crusades, though rather satirically; finally, when old, and at the end of his career, he became a monk, and ended his days in austerity and penance.<sup>1</sup> He was a power in his time, not on account of his large possessions or of his numerous followers, but on account of his writings, which were like pamphlets, and either satirical, eulogistic, or warlike. Dante gives him a place in his *Inferno*, where Bertrand wanders about without a head, because he had "divided those whom nature had united."

But it was in Provence particularly that the art of the troubadour attained its acme of grace, of courtliness, of subtle and exquisite expression. And the troubadours of Provence were for the most part highly born and delicately nurtured, like Rambaud de Vaquieras,<sup>2</sup> Guy de Cavaillon,<sup>3</sup> the Countess of Die, and other friends and clients of such discriminating patrons as the lords of Orange, the Marquis d'Apt, the Counts de Vienne and de Forcalquier. The art of poetry was in fact one of the fashionable accomplishments of the time; and it would probably have been taken as a reproach against any man of high position if he could not either compose a song or at least keep a poet attached to his person.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Between the years 1208 and 1210.

<sup>2</sup> 1226.

<sup>3</sup> 1210.

<sup>4</sup> The troubadours from Provence were also larger in number than those from any other place. M. E. Baret, in his *Les Troubadours et leur influence*

More than one of the English Norman kings prided themselves on the troubadour's fame; and a fragment is extant in which the Emperor Frederic I. sufficiently justified his claim to rank amongst the poets of his day. He happened to meet at Turin Bérenger II., Count of Provence; and after listening to the songs of many of Bérenger's courtiers, he replied to them in the following lines:—

I love the French cavalier,  
And the Catalan lady,  
And the civility of the Genoese,  
And the Castillian courtesy,  
The Provençals' singing,  
And the dance of Trevisa,  
And the shape of the Aragonese,  
And the pearl Julian,  
The English hand and face,  
And the youth from Tuscany.<sup>1</sup>

The war against the Albigenses aroused also the patriotic ire of many of the Provençal troubadours. The *Chanson des Albigeois* was commenced by Guillaume de Tudela,<sup>2</sup> in an ordinary humdrum descriptive metre, but was continued in 1210 by an unknown troubadour, who brought it down until the second siege of Toulouse. His style imitates that of

*sur la littérature du Midi de l'Europe*, says that 45 troubadours belonged to Provence, 29 to Gascony, 20 to Auvergne, 14 to the Limousin, 14 to Montferrat, 10 to Narbonne, 9 to Toulouse, 8 to Rodez, 8 to Vienne, 4 to Saintonge, and 4 to Béziers.

<sup>1</sup> Plas mi cavalier francez,  
E la donna catalana,  
E l'onrar del Ginoes  
E la court de castellana  
Lou cantar provençalez,  
E la danza trevisana,  
E lou corps aragones  
E la perla juliana,  
La mans et kara d'angles,  
E lou donzel de Toscana.

<sup>2</sup> Born about 1190.



the Carlovingian *Chansons de Geste*; and he sympathises with the victims throughout. Guillaume Figueiras, a tailor of Toulouse, had himself seen Bishop Folquet direct the slaughter of his hapless fellow-citizens, and was converted by the sight into a poet and *jongleur*. He went into Lombardy, and protested with all his might against the cruelty of that eighteen years' war, in terms of the deepest indignation and the most trenchant satire. And was there not room for satire, in an age when the Dominican Izarn could express the spirit of Christianity, then dominant, in a song wherein the priest, essaying to convert an Albigensian heretic, ends every couplet with this unanswerable argument, "Believe as we do, or you will be burnt"?

*Jongleurs* and *jongleresses*, or *jugleresses*, were perhaps in greater request in the south than in the north; and their skill was exercised not only in singing the favourite songs of dead or absent troubadours, and in accompanying the words on a musical instrument, but also, not unfrequently, in performing sleight-of-hand tricks, standing on their heads, walking on their hands, whirling and catching knives, baskets, copper balls and plates, or putting through their paces the bears and monkeys which accompanied them on their travels. Representations of such feats as these, of which all classes of society in the Middle Ages, from the nobles in their, for that age, luxurious halls to the common people in the public streets, loved above everything to be spectators, are preserved in manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and may be seen by the curious in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library, or in the careful facsimiles of M. Paul Lacroix. A string of dancing fools with their caps and bells, a monkey riding a bear, dogs and monkeys playing the guitar or hurdy-gurdy, performing bears and ponies, *jongleurs* on a stage, with scenery at their backs, going far towards lending a colour to the belief that the drama was

not without its cultivators even in the thirteenth century ; such are amongst the pictures of Middle Age life which these ancient documents have preserved for us. As for the social position of the *jongleurs* in the south, it seems to have been much the same as in the north of France, that is to say, at all events no better than that of the wandering acrobats of our own times ; whilst their character was, let us hope, not worse. St. Bernard, however, thought differently, for in the middle of the twelfth century he thought it necessary to warn his hearers against them.<sup>1</sup> And yet, without the *symphonie*, the *mandore*, the *monocorde*, the *psalterion*, the *rote* and the *viole* of the *jongleur* and *bateleur*, the troubadour, whose skill ended with his song, would have found it difficult to entertain his audience.

The audience in which a troubadour chiefly delighted was naturally one composed of king, marquis, or count, with the noble ladies and gentlemen of his court, his guests, and attendants. From these he could reckon on meeting the readiest appreciation, and the most welcome manifestations of favour. It happened often enough that the shortest path to promotion lay in pleasing the fastidious ears of such powerful patrons as Richard Cœur de Lion, Guillaume VIII. of Montpellier,<sup>2</sup> Alphonso of Arragon,<sup>3</sup> and Alphonso IV.<sup>4</sup> and Alphonso IX.,<sup>5</sup> kings of Castille, the Viscount Barral of Marseille,<sup>6</sup> the Dauphin of Auvergne,<sup>7</sup> and the Counts of Provence through many generations.

Let us picture to ourselves an evening's entertainment in the castle or palace of one of these wealthy hosts on an occasion of special hospitality and conviviality. After an early meal, the royal or noble entertainer and his more

<sup>1</sup> "Home entendus aux jongleurs assez tost averoit une fesse que on appelle Pouvrete. Et si il avient que les jeux des jongleurs te placent, feyn de les oyr et que autrre part tu penses. Les instruments des jongleurs ne placent à Dieu." <sup>2</sup> 1172-1204. <sup>3</sup> 1152-1196. <sup>4</sup> 1155-1214.

<sup>5</sup> 1185-1229.

<sup>6</sup> 1180.

<sup>7</sup> 1169-1224.

honoured guests retire by themselves into a "withdrawing room," an apartment supplied with numerous small tables and couches, brilliantly lighted with a hundred torches, of which the smoke is driven by the draughts, which come through the ill-closing doors or casements, high up in the air. The floor has been newly spread with picked rushes, or, in some cases, with a costly eastern carpet, the walls hung with hangings worked by the dainty hands of the ladies of the house, or purchased at one of the few places where the trade had already begun to flourish. Chess, or cards, or some other game which chanced to be in fashion, occupies an hour or more of time, until the gradual hum of conversation suggests the introduction of a song or a story. One or other of the guests is nothing loth to display his powers of memory or improvisation; and by this means the afternoon is pleasantly wiled away—not, perhaps, without a furtive slumber on the part of more than one of the company—until the time arrives when the host invites his friends to repair to the great hall of the mansion, where a brilliant feast has been arranged for them. Here already are gathered the guests of less distinction, who have in the meanwhile been amusing themselves in nearly the same manner as their superiors. The eating and drinking is by no means effected in silence. Jests, jokes, hearty laughter, add to or drown the din kept up by the waiting men and women; whilst even before the dishes are done with, the guests move from place to place, or throw the dice between every couple of mouthfuls. There is no hurry over the plentiful meal, as, reclining on cushions of many-coloured silk or velvet, the light-hearted ladies and gentlemen prolong their appetite by flirting, or wrangling, or exchanging every kind of jest. And, at a given signal, a well-clad troubadour or *jongleur* enters the hall, and, standing before the long table at which the host is seated, strikes the strings of his instrument, and accompanies himself to many a gay *chanson* or interesting *fabliau*. Hardly

has he completed his task, and discovered a seat where he may attend to the claims of his appetite, than a company of *jugleurs* and *jugleresses* trip into the open space, and at once rivet every eager eye ; not, perhaps, completing their show before more than one of the spectators have abandoned themselves to the happy unconsciousness which follows upon an amply-satisfying repast, and an indulgence in the generous wine so frequently handed round from guest to guest.

To many a troubadour, however, the audience which he preferred before all was the one fair lady who was fortunate enough for the time being to arrest his generally fickle fancy. To her he would address his most tender and gracious lays ; she would be the inspiration and heroine of his *tensons*, *aubades*, and *sérénades* ; for her he would exert his utmost powers of expression, and attune the sweetest notes of his viol and of his voice. It was a task, often enough, of difficulty and danger ; for he had always plenty of rivals busy at the same work, and he would be fortunate if he did not encounter the wrath or revenge of her family or her husband. And yet it would seem that the singers as a rule had the best of it in those days, and in that land of song and sun. Many a fair maiden's heart was won by a gay and gallant troubadour ; many an over-trustful man has had the laugh turned against him by the vagaries of his too susceptible spouse. The art of seduction—in its highest and in its lowest sense—was professed, studied, and practised in this condition of society with great zest and skill. Its laws were drawn up and discussed, its refinements occupied the attention of princes, poets, knights, and men of the world ; its triumphs were coveted by all classes, and the fair sex in general considered it their highest glory thus to incite and to possess the power of requiting the exertions of their pursuers. It was about the close of the twelfth century that André le Chapelain wrote a Latin treatise *De Arte amatoria, et reprobatione*



*amoris*. Nostradamus,<sup>1</sup> the first historian of the troubadours, specifies a number of courts and their presidents, by whom judgment was regularly passed in matters pertaining to courtship and love; and although he is far from being a safe guide in questions of literary doubt, he may probably be depended upon as confirming the fact of the existence of some such courts of love as those which he mentions. Describing one form of poetic composition in common use amongst the troubadours, he says: "Tensons were disputes concerning love which took place between cavaliers and poetic ladies, who discussed some fine and subtle question of love; and when they could not agree, they sent, in order to have the matter settled, to illustrious lady-presidents, who held courts of love at Signe (Segni), at Pierrefeu, at Romanino, or elsewhere; and trials were sustained on this topic, which they called *lous arrests d'amour*." On the names mentioned by Nostradamus, whether of places or persons, we can set very little reliance, and the courts of Love, such as he knew them in the fourteenth century, can have borne but slight resemblance to those which existed in the time of André le Chapelain, before the constitution of chivalrous society had received a fatal shock from the horrors of internecine war. Of the history and processes of these earlier courts we have not much to build upon of an authentic nature; but it is probable enough that they owed their origin to the merely literary competitions which were held and determined in the feudal castles of the great lords of the south.<sup>2</sup> What remains

<sup>1</sup> Died in 1590.

<sup>2</sup> Diez in his essay *Ueber die Minnehöfe* denies the existence of similar Courts and of the Code of Love, but says that such discussions served to while away the time of noble lords and ladies. M. Aubertin, in his *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature françaises au moyen âge*, 1876, is of the same opinion as the learned German. The eminent French historian Henri Martin maintains in his *History of France* that they did exist. Those who wish to know something more on this subject should read *La vie au temps des Cours d'Amour* by Ant. Méréay, 1876.

certain is that no document yet brought to light contains a mention of this singular institution as having been in existence previous to the time of the crusades. Is it to the crusades themselves, in that state of things to which Ariosto refers,<sup>1</sup> speaking of the return of the Greeks from Troy, rather than in the simplicity of a literary custom, that we are to look for the origin of the courts of Love?<sup>2</sup> At all events, this institution, like many another in the same epoch, however fantastic it may appear to us on first acquaintance, no doubt served a very useful purpose. It recognised and even sanctioned the equivocal relations of the sexes, but it refined the inevitable evil, substituted an easy for an almost impracticable moral code, and, being compelled to draw a new line between venial offences and coarse licentiousness, exacted a rigid obedience to its laws. The courts of love rescued woman from what would have become a condition of intolerable degradation; it elevated affection rather than passion into the place of honour; it encouraged devotion in the stronger sex, grace and propriety in the weaker; and when a more wholesome state of society succeeded to the fevered period of the crusades, with the institution itself disappeared its worst concomitants, but there remained at all events the developed taste and courtesy for womankind.

The Code of Love which governed the judgments of these courts, whose authority was at least equal, in their own jurisdiction, to those of State and Church,<sup>3</sup> and disobedience to

<sup>1</sup> *Orlando Furioso*, canto xx. 10—

. . . . . che le lor donne alli tormenti  
Di tanta assenza avean preso remedio :  
Tutte s' avean giovani amanti eletti.

<sup>2</sup> André himself assigns their origin to Brittany, in the days of the British King Arthur; but manifestly without historic authority.

<sup>3</sup> The courts were held at times by as many as fifty or sixty of the principal ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood, in addition to the president. For many years there was open court at Avignon, within a stone's throw of the residence of the Popes.

which was punished by expulsion from society, is a remarkable collection of legal love-maxims. They are thirty-one in number ; and amongst the most significant are these :—"The plea of wedlock is not a sufficient excuse from love. He or she who does not conceal her feelings cannot love. None can be bound by a double love. It is an undoubted fact that love is always being diminished or increased. A two years' widowhood for a deceased lover is enjoined upon the survivor. It is shameful to love those whom it is shameful to desire to marry. A true lover does not desire the embrace of any one save his companion in love. Love rarely endures when made public. Easy acceptance renders love contemptible ; a slow acceptance causes it to be held dear. Every lover is wont to grow pale in the presence of his love. At the sudden sight of his love, the lover's heart trembles. Honesty alone makes one worthy of love. A man full of love is ever full of fear. Love can deny nothing to a lover. He who is harassed by too much luxury is not wont to love.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing to prevent one woman from being loved by two men, nor one man by two women."

With a single illustration of the process and judgments of the courts of love, taken from the pages of André le Chapelain, and assigned by him to the year 1174, although its date is probably ten years earlier, we shall pass on to the consideration of Provençal poetry in the specimens which have been preserved of it. To the court of the Countess of Champagne came a certain lady and a count, with a case for decision which they embodied in the following petition :—

"It is proved by old experience that we should look for correct judgment in the neighbourhood where grows the Tree of Knowledge, and that in our necessity we should draw water rather from the brimming fountain than from the failing stream,

<sup>1</sup> "Quem nimia voluptatis abundantia vexat."

since abundance of gifts cannot proceed from dearth of riches. Being one day under the shadow of a tree, discoursing of love and examining its commandments, a doubt arose between us, whether love could exist among the married, or jealousy among lovers. We disputed on this doubt, and supported our respective opinion with arguments; but neither of us would give way. We agreed, therefore, after long contention, to submit it to your arbitration. And we now lay before you our opinions in writing, being firmly resolved to abide by your award, and perfectly confident that the truth will be elicited and speedily determined by your Excellency."

To this petition the countess, after due deliberation with her assessors, made the following reply, couched, like the petition, in the prescribed terms of the courts:—

"Because we are bound to attend to all just petitions, and must not refuse our aid to those who are worthy to receive it—especially to those who err in the articles of love, and require to be directed aright therein—this which you have commended to me by your letter I shall study to bring immediately to a proper termination. Your letter states that between you arose this doubt, whether true love may exist between the married, or jealousy between lovers; and that, having debated the matter in vain between yourselves, you desire that I, who have your arguments before me, may determine which of you is in the right. Therefore, having examined the said arguments by the aid of sound science, we proceed hereby to enact that Love cannot extend his laws between husband and wife, since the gifts of love are voluntary, and husband and wife are the servants of duty; also there can be, in our opinion, no jealousy between the married, since between them there can be no love. For jealousy is the companion of love, as is set forth in the Code of Love, which declares that love cannot exist without jealousy. This is our decision, formed with much deliberation, and with the approval of many dames; and we decree that it be held firm and inviolable."

This was a *cause célèbre* in the courts of love, and was frequently referred to in subsequent decisions; for instance by



Eleanor of Guyenne, afterwards Queen of England, herself a noted president at these courts, when she decided in favour of a gallant who, wooing a lady already engaged, obtained from her a promise to listen to his suit if she should ever find herself at liberty to do so, and who claimed the fulfilment of the promise as soon as the lady had married the man of her choice.

The *chansons*, *cançons*, or *cansos* were, as a rule, the longest and the most dignified of the songs of the troubadours, who adopted this style in particular when they wished to deal worthily with the praise of God, of religion or morality, or when they would attach a special element of solemnity to their commendation of the object of their affection. The versification usually consists of decasyllabic couplets, though the rhymes occasionally alternate, and, in finished compositions, correspond in the several stanzas, line for line and rhyme for rhyme. *Chansons* of shorter length and less elevated subject acquired the name of *cançonetta* or *demi-chanson*; whereof the following graceful song of Claire D'Anduse,<sup>1</sup> addressed to Hugues de Saint-Cyr, is an example :—

“ In grievous trouble and in grievous care  
Have (they) plunged my heart, and in great disturbance,  
The liars and the false surmisers,  
Depressers of joy and youth ;  
Whereas thee, whom I love more than aught in the world,  
They have caused to depart and stay away from me,  
So that I can no more see or gaze on thee,  
And thus I die of grief, of ire, and of rage.

“ He who blames my love for thee, or forbids it,  
Cannot cause my heart to improve in any way,  
Nor increase the sweet desire I have for thee,  
Nor the longing, nor the desire, nor the liking ;  
And there is no man, however much an enemy he be,

<sup>1</sup> De Sainte-Palaie, in his *Histoire littéraire des Troubadours*, ii. 477, says that this lady troubadour is unknown, and has only left the above song

If he speak well of thee, whom I do not hold dear,  
And, if he speak ill of thee, can say or do to me  
Aught which is capable of pleasing me.

"Never, fair friend, give thyself a fear  
That I might have a treacherous heart towards thee.  
Nor that I could change thee for any other lover  
Though a hundred other ladies urge me.  
The love which holds me for thee in its keeping  
Wills that I save and guard my heart for thee,  
And that will I do; and if I could remove  
My body, he who has it should never possess it."

<sup>1</sup> " En greu esmai et en greu pessamen,  
An mes mon cor et en granda error,  
Li lauzengier e'lh fals devinador,  
Abayssador de joy e de joven,  
Quar vos, qu'ieu am mais que res qu'el mon sis,  
An fait de me departir e lonhar,  
Si qu'ieu no us puese vezer ni remirar,  
Don muer de dol d'ira e de feunia.

" Selh que m blasma vostr' amor ni m defen  
Non podon far en re mon cor mellor,  
Ni' dous dezir qu'ieu ai de vos major,  
Ni l'enveya, ni'l dezir, ni'l talen ;  
E non es hom, tan mos enemiox sia,  
S'il n'aug dir ben, que non tenha encar,  
E, si'n ditz mal, mais no m pot dir ni far  
Neguna re que a plazer me sia.

" Ja no us donetz, bels amics, espaven  
Que ja ves vos aia cor trichador,  
Ne qu'ie us cange per nul autr' amador,  
Si m pregavon d'autras donas un cen ;  
Qu' amors que m te' per vos en sa bailia,  
Vol que mon cor vos estuy e vos gar ;  
E farai o ; e s'ieu pogues emblar  
Mon cors, tals l'a que j'amaia non l'auria."

In the English translation of Sismondi's *Literature of the South of Europe*, vol. i. p. 107, Mr. Roscoe has given a translation in verse of this song, of which we subjoin the first couplet :-

" Into what cruel grief and deep distress  
The jealous and the false have plunged my heart.

The *sirvente*, which gradually became transferred from subjects of love to subjects of war, and the satire of manners and political abuses, and which has consequently more of fire and sincerity than most Provençal songs, was divided into stanzas like the *chanson*, though both in length and number of lines, and in the succession of rhymes, it was more irregular. Such a style of composition was admirably suited to the impassioned military ardour, the bitter preliminaries, or the triumphant sequels of war. Partaking somewhat of each characteristic, and blending therewith the most delicate refinement of thought and language, the following *sirvente* of Bernard Arnaud de Montcuc fairly challenges our attention. It was written apparently on the renewal, by Henry the Second of England, of his pretensions to the county of Toulouse, which town he unsuccessfully besieged in 1159.

“Now when the rose trees  
Are without flower or seed,  
And the rich inferiors  
Have (their) chase through the plains,  
The humour takes me,  
So doth their quarrel please me,  
To make a *sirvente*.  
For in low estate  
They have all good store made,  
And because love  
Makes me more gay  
Than doth  
The fine time of May ;  
Now am I gay, whomsoever that afflicts ;  
Such joy is promised me.

Depriving it by every treacherous art  
Of all its hopes of joy and happiness :  
For they have forced thee from my arms to fly,  
Whom far above this evil life I prize ;  
And they have hid thee from my loving eyes.  
Alas ! with grief, and ire, and rage, I die.”

- “Many a courser steed  
Shall we see towards Tarzaze,  
Hard by Balaguier,  
Of the doughty king who boasts  
That he has claim to excel;  
He will come without fail  
There in Carcassone.  
But great fear  
The Frenchmen have not:  
But that have I  
Here of thee  
Lady, because (it) terrifies me  
The desire that I have  
For thy fair courtly body  
Fulfil all good things.
- “This armed steed,  
Hauberk, polished lance,  
And good sword of steel,  
And approaching war,  
I prize more than greyhound  
Or brave appearance,  
Or peace, by which one is  
Minished of possession  
Depressed and made low;  
And because I know  
The true worth  
Which I shall have in thee  
Lady, or I shall die,  
I pride more that which I lack of thee  
Than if I possessed another.
- “Pleaseth me well the archer  
Near the barbican,  
When he casteth the stones,  
And the wall crumbles,  
And through many an orchard  
The army grows and is arranged;  
And I would (it) were as pleasing,



Such mastery,  
 There to the English king :  
 As it pleaseth me  
 When I recall  
 How thou hast with joy  
 Lady, here gained  
 The prize of youth and beauty,  
 So that naught fails thee.

“And he would have entire  
 Honour, he whom all despise,  
 If with such heed  
 He would here cry :  
 (Oh) Guienne !  
 And would smite the first,  
 The honoured Count of Valence,  
 For his seal (fame) is  
 Of such light import  
 That here I name it not.  
 But I will say  
 That with fear  
 I own love.  
 Lady, what shall I do  
 If with thee mercy avail me not,  
 Nor my good faith ?

“ENVOI.

Gay lord  
 And true,  
 Who knowest (how) from every quarrel  
 To gain honour, as I know,  
 From Toulouse and from the Agenois  
 In spite of the French.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We give below the two first stanzas and the *envoi* in the original.

“ Er can li rozier	De far sirventes ;
So ses flor ni grana,	Chai cu . . . tenensa
E'l ric menuzier	An tot bon pretz mes :
An cassa per sana,	U . . . may
M'es pres cossirier,	Me ten gay
Tan me platz lor tenza,	Amors, que non fay

The *tensons*, as we have already said, were discussions usually between knights and lady-poets about some delicate love question. Here follow four stanzas of one between the Countess of Die and Raimbaud of Orange :—

“ Friend, with great torment,  
I am through you in great trouble ;  
And, from the grief which I suffer through it,  
I do not believe that you feel anything.  
Therefore, why do you call yourself a lover,  
Since to me you leave all the evil ?  
For we two do not share it equally.”

“ Lady, love has such work,  
When two friends it enchains,  
That the evil they have, and the joy,  
Each feels in his (own) way ;  
Because I think, and I am no deceiver,  
That a severe pang at heart  
Wholly possesses me.” . . .

“ Friend, so much I know you a flatterer,  
What regards amorous affairs,  
That I believe that as a knight  
You have become fickle ;

“ El bel temps de may,  
Eras soy gais, euy que pes,  
Tals joys m'es promes.

Mon caval corsier  
Veirem vas Tarzana,  
Devas Balaguier,  
Del pros rey que s vana  
C'a pretz a sobrier ;  
Venra ses fallensa

Lay en Carcasses ;  
Mas ges gran temensa  
Non an li Franeses :  
Mas ieu n'ai  
De vos sai,  
Dona, qui m'esglai  
Lo desir qu'ieu n'ay  
Del vostre bel cors cortas  
Complit de totz bes.” . .

#### ENVOI.

“ Senhor gay  
E veray,  
Que s sap de tot play  
Onrar, qu'ieu o say,  
De Tolza e d'Aganes,  
Malgrat dels Franeses.”

And I must well remind you of it,  
For well it appears that you think of another,  
Because for my thoughts you do not care."

"Lady, may never hawk  
I carry, nor (follow the) chase in fine weather,  
If ever—since you gave me entire joy—  
I was of any other a follower :  
Nor am I such a deceiver ;  
But through envy the disloyal  
Suppose me so, and make me out venal." <sup>1</sup>

The *aubade* is amongst the most graceful in form and spirit of all the Provençal songs, dealing, as it does, with perhaps the loveliest moment of the day—the passing of the darkness and the dawning of the light. The topics inwoven with this distinctive idea are sometimes religious ; but here, also, in the great majority of instances, Love exacts the honour due to him. Two lovers, chiding the inopportune appearance of the sun, and lamenting the shortness of night, are again and again the characters who figure in the *aubade*, and not unfrequently add a touch of looseness to the natural grace and tenderness of the poem. Such is the case with the following exquisite and anonymous piece :—<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Amicx, ab gran cossirier  
Sui per vos et en greu pena,  
E del mal qu'ieu en suffier  
No cre que vos sentatz guaire ;  
Doncx, per que us metetz amaire  
Pus a me laissatz tot la mal ?  
Quar abduy no'l partem equal."

Domna, amors a tal mestier,  
Pus dos amicx encadena,  
Qu'el mal qu'an e l'alegrier  
Senta quex a son veiaire ;  
Qu'ieu pens, e no sui guabaire,  
Que la dura dolor coral  
Ai eu tota a mon cabal." . . .

" Amicx, tan vos sai lauzengier  
E fait d'amorosa mena  
Qu'ieu cug que de cavalier  
Siatz devengutz camjaire ;  
E deg vos o ben retraire,  
Quar ben paretz que pessetz d'ai,  
Posdel mieu pensamen no us cal."

" Domna, jamais esparvier  
No port, ni cas ab cerena  
S'anc pueys, que m detz joi entier  
Fuy de nulh' altra enquistaire ;  
Ni no suy aital bauzaire ;  
Mas per enveia'l deslial  
M'o alevon e m fan venal."

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Swinburne, in his *Poems and Songs*, has partly paraphrased this

" Within an orchard, under the hawthorn leaves,  
The lady holds her friend to her side,  
Until the watcher cries he sees the dawn.  
O God! O God! that dawn should come so soon!

" Would God the night might never fail,  
And that my friend might ne'er depart from me,  
And that the watcher might see day nor dawn.  
O God! O God! that dawn should come so soon!

" Fair sweet friend, let us make play anew,  
In the garden where sing the birds,  
Until the watcher touch his pipe.  
O God! O God! that dawn should come so soon!

" By the sweet air which has come from thence,  
From my friend fair, courteous, and gay,  
Of his breath have I drunk a sweet draught.  
O God! O God! that dawn should come so soon!

" The lady is agreeable and pleasant.  
For her beauty many gaze upon her,  
And she possesseth her heart in loyal love—  
O God! O God! that dawn should come so soon!"<sup>1</sup>

song in "The Orchard," without sacrificing the passion and beauty of the original. We give the first stanza:—

" Leave go my hands, let me catch breath and see;  
Let the dewfall drench either side of me;  
Clear apple-leaves are soft upon that moon,  
Seen sidelong like a blossom in the tree;  
Ah God! ah God! that day should be so soon."

<sup>1</sup> " En un vergier, sotz fuelha d'albespi,  
Tenc la dompna son amic costa si,  
Tro la Gayta crida que l'alba vi.  
Oy Dieus! oy Dieus! de l'alba tan tost ve!

" Plagues à Dieu ja la nueitz non fallis,  
Ni'l mieus amix lonc de mi no s partis,  
Ni la Gayta jorn ni alba ne vis.  
Oy Dieus! oy Dieus! de l'alba tan tost ve!

" Bels dous amix, fassam un joe novel  
Ins el jardi on chanton li auzel.



We have not illustrated, nor even so much as mentioned, all the varieties of Provençal verse. The task would be a long one, and it may be doubted whether its fulfilment would earn for us the thanks of our readers. But it must not be supposed that the lyric verse of the troubadours, though this is characteristic of the age and the country, comprises the whole poetry of southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We have already mentioned the bitter satire generated by the abuses of the Church, and by the cruelties of the crusade against the Albigenses. We have noticed also the *ensenhamen*, popular treatises in rhyme usually addressed to some high-born lord or lady, and containing sage precepts upon the regulation of conduct and etiquette. Amanieu des Escas<sup>1</sup> was a didactic poet of this school, two of whose *ensenhamen* are extant. Nor was prose unpractised in the Romance tongue of the south, even by the troubadours. Raimbaud, Count of Orange,<sup>2</sup> one of the earliest troubadours of Provence proper, has left a poem, every couplet of which is followed by a commentary in prose. The *épître*, again, was a familiar form of composition, arranged generally in lines of less than ten syllables, which served as a vehicle for petitions, thanks, advice, moral suasion, or instruction. The *trésors* were, as a rule, dreamy and monotonous encyclopedias, charged with meagre reminiscences of all the facts of art or science which

Tro la Gayta toque son caramel.

Oy Dieus ! oy Dieus ! de l'alba tan tost ve !

“ Per la douss' aura qu'es venguda de lay

Del mieu amic belh e cortes e gay,

Del sieu alen ai begut un dous ray.

Oy Dieus ! oy Dieus ! de l'alba tan tost ve !

“ La dompna es agradans e plazens ;

Per sa beutat la gardon mantas gens,

E a son cor en amar leyalmens.

Oy Dieus ! oy Dieus ! de l'alba tan tost ve !

<sup>1</sup> He lived about the end of the thirteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> He died in 1175

happened to have come under the writer's cognisance. That of Pierre de Corbiac<sup>1</sup> consists of some eight hundred and forty alexandrines limited to a single rhyme. He says of himself—<sup>2</sup>

"I am rich in mind, and though I have no great inheritance, castles, hamlets, and other domains; although I have neither gold, silver, nor silk, no other wealth than my own person. I am nevertheless not poor. I am even richer than a man who has a thousand golden marks. I was born at Corbiac, where I have relatives and friends. My income is moderate, but my courtesy and my intelligence make me live respected by gentlefolks. I walk with my head erect, like a rich man; and indeed I am one, as I have collected a treasure" (knowledge).

This splendid literature, this poetic blossom of southern France, was completely crushed by the terrible wars and sufferings of the country in the fanatical crusade directed against it from the north. The inspiration of the troubadours perished with the independence of the southern kingdoms and counties, and with the religious freedom and purity of the Albigenses. The Romance lyric poetry, which had from the beginning flourished chiefly in Provence, found at the court of the Provençal Counts its latest refuge. "These good Counts,"<sup>3</sup> Nostradamus says, "were, as if by inheritance, so munificent and liberal towards lofty and noble spirits, that they heaped upon them honours, lordships, and wealth, that day by day one found rare and illustrious poets brought to the light, so that it seemed as if Provence would never be barren, nor cease from the production of lofty spirits, excellent and distinguished men." The death of the last of the Bérengers, and the accession of Charles of Anjou, who cared

<sup>1</sup> Probably about the thirteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript of the National Library at Paris.

<sup>3</sup> *Bons Contes* was the name usually given by the troubadours to the Counts of Toulouse.

more for politics than for letters, brought this Augustan age to an end; and before many years had passed, the cession by Amaury de Montfort of his father's possessions to the king of northern France virtually ended the independence of the south. In 1229 was founded the university of Toulouse, and Innocent IV., stigmatising the Romance language as being identified with heretical opinions, forbade its employment by the students, and so contributed to hasten the decline of the literature of the troubadours. The language of the north was thus, in a manner, forced upon the south; and from this time we find, without surprise, that Romance literature, in so far as it may be said to have continued in existence, steadily deteriorated, whilst the *langue d'oc* became more and more affected by the influence of its northern rival. The troubadours of the fourteenth century afford ample evidence of the fact, as may be readily perceived from a glance at the pages of Geffroy de Luc, Raymond de la Tour de Marseille, who wrote a sirvente against his mother-in-law, and of Bernard Rascas.<sup>1</sup>

#### § 4. EARLY EPICS OF THE *LANGUE D'OÏL*

The tenth century had been the darkest of the dark ages; and the meagre trace which it has left upon the page of history tells us of little more than terrible plagues, famines of almost incredible severity recurring year after year, universal horror and depression, during which men's hearts failed them, and nothing less than the destruction of the world was looked for day by day. The eleventh century lifted this dark veil;

<sup>1</sup> Take for example the following lines from Rascas, inspired by the death of his wife:—

“ Lous ours hardys . . .  
 Lou dauphin dins la mar, lou tone e la balena,  
 Monstres impetuous, ryaumes e comtats  
 Lous princes e lous reys saran per mort domtas.”

pestilence and famine had done their worst ; the hopes of men revived, and they set themselves once more to build, and plant, and enjoy, and fight. Then once more literature revived ; and that which was really the dawn of French literature at last appeared.

It is of course extremely natural, and precisely what we should have expected, that the first poetry of the north was epic rather than lyric ; based as it was rather upon the deeds of heroes than of lovers. And again it is natural that the *trouvères* of this epic poetry rather sought for their heroes in the history and traditions of the countries with which their ancestors had been most closely associated ; that is to say, in the history of ancient Greece and Rome, in the traditions of Britain and Brittany, and in the recent traditions of their own country. As for the Teutons on the continent, the genius of France seemed as unwilling to be indebted to them for her literature as for their language.

The *trouvères* were the makers of the poems wherewith they delighted to cheer all classes, and to rouse their spirits, even for war. They took it ill that their less staid and decorous rivals, the *jongleurs*, who were singers rather than poets, should sometimes attract the praises and the rewards of their patrons ; they called them *trouvères bâtarde*s, and asserted that they degraded the noble art ; priding themselves especially on their intellectual superiority which enabled them to be original. Benoît de Sainte-Maure<sup>1</sup> boasts that his "story is not worn, nor scarcely found in any places, nor has as yet been written." And the unknown author of the *Roman de Thèbes*<sup>2</sup> says bitterly, "Now they go, of all trades, though neither scholar nor knight ; for as many can listen as asses to a

<sup>1</sup> In the *Roman de Troie*.

" Cette ystoire n'est pas usée,  
Ni en gaire de lieux trovée,  
Jà écrit ne fut encore."

<sup>2</sup> " Or s'en aillent de tous mestiers,  
Se il n'est chens en chevaliers :  
Car autant peuvent oouter  
Comme les ânes au harper."



harper." And another sings :<sup>1</sup> "Now lords, whom may God bless, listen to a song of many a great lordship ; *jongleurs* sing it, but hardly know it. A scholar has put it in rhyme, and arranged it again." And another,<sup>2</sup> "These *jongleurs* who do not know how to rhyme, made the work go wrong in several places, and did not know how to place the words." From which it is clear that the *jongleurs* ventured sometimes to turn the tables on the *trouvères* by emendations and glosses as well as by original versification.

The *jongleur* was usually, however, a man of no pretension to social consideration ; being either a wandering knave, blest with a strong constitution, a good memory, and abundance of coolness and cleverness, or else a household servant—in the same sense that a *ménéstrel*<sup>3</sup> was primarily a domestic. He carried with him his *vielle*, a small kind of violin, across the strings whereof he drew his bow in the intervals between his strophes, whilst he sang his stories, with a monotonous cadence at the end of each line. He was welcome enough at feasts, marriages, tournaments, and generally at the tables of the rich. His audience—now within doors, now without—would gather round him and listen greedily to his songs ; "baron, knight, and sergeant-at-law, men and women great and small." At the sound of his fiddle he was sure to have a crowd about him ; and he would whet the appetite of his hearers by boasting that "there was none in the whole world who knew so many *Chansons de Geste*<sup>4</sup> as he, that he

<sup>1</sup> " Or écoutez, seigneurs que Dieu bénie,  
Une chanson de moult grand seigneurie ;  
Jongleurs la chantent et ne la savent mie  
Un clerc en vers l'a mise, et rétablie."

<sup>2</sup> " Ces jongleurs qui ne savent rimer  
Firent l'ouvrage en plusieurs lieux fausser,  
Ne surent pas les paroles placer."

<sup>3</sup> *Minister ministrellus*.

<sup>4</sup> The name by which the national French epics were usually described was *Chansons de Geste* ; from the Latin phrase *res gestæ*, public acts, authentic narrative. Of these *Chansons*, 800 manuscripts have been already (1876) dis-

knew tales of adventures, delightful to hear, and also tales of the Round Table." And after all was over, he or his wife would go round collecting the coin, apostrophising those who gave nothing, much in the style of wandering jugglers in the nineteenth century.

The first efforts of the *trouvères* were partly directed towards the celebration of national heroes ; both because the deeds of illustrious Frenchmen were most familiar to them, and were the subject of greater pride to themselves and to their hearers, and because their poetic genius, still only half-fledged, had not acquired the courage to venture far afield. And truly there was, in the history of the Carlovingian kings and their knights, as well as of their predecessors and successors, abundant inspiration for romantic minds. Throughout the long night of the tenth century Frenchmen had cherished the glories of the previous epoch, during which the sword of Charlemagne had established a mighty empire, stretching between the North Sea and the Mediterranean, between the Ebro and the Oder. No sooner had a new prosperity taught the poet to sing, and given to kings, nobles, and people, the leisure and the inclination to hear, than the mind of the nation fell back upon its happiest traditions, and began to create its popular literature. Some of the earliest poems of the *trouvères* go as far back as the times of Clovis and Dagobert ;<sup>1</sup> whilst others come down almost to contemporary heroes.<sup>2</sup> But of all the epics of the national French cycle, the figure of Charlemagne is the centre, as Arthur is the centre of the epics of Britain.

covered, including those of the Carlovingian, Classical, and Arthurian cycles. The word *geste* came to be used as an abstract substantive ; *gens de geste* were men of historic fame or ancestry.

<sup>1</sup> The romances of *Partholapier de Blois*, and *Floriant et Florentin*. The old English versions of the first romance have been edited for the Roxburghe Club by the Rev. W. E. Buckley, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> The romances of *Hugh Capet* (who died A.D. 996), *Le Chevalier au Cygne*, and *La Bataille de Bouillon*. An English abridgment of the second romance, called *The Knight of the Swan*, has been often published ; the last edition by Mr. H. H. Gibbs, for the Early English Text Society.

The best poems of this national French cycle were written, or at least the date of their first documentary evidence occurs, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; but there is little doubt that many of these existed, in more or less incomplete form, as early as the eleventh century. And in any case, this latter epoch is sufficiently distinguished by poems which unquestionably had their origin soon after the death of Hugh Capet. We read of a *jongleur* in the army of William the Conqueror, A.D. 1066, who sang the deeds of Roland as he rode to meet the foe. Wace describes him in the *Roman de Rou*, as "Taillefer, who sang very well, upon a horse which quickly went, rode before the duke, singing of Charlemagne and of Roland, and of Oliver and his vassals who died at Roncevaux."<sup>1</sup>

It would be impossible to state with precision the date when the popular epics of France—whether in the Romance, in the purer Latin, or in any other tongue—had birth. It would be difficult, in the first place, to assign the period when the ancient Gaelic and Iberian ceased to be employed in the remote country districts, where these languages would certainly endure long after Latin had become common in the towns. And, in the absence of documentary evidence, it would be rash to assert that there was no popular poetry in France, even in the Romance language, before the seventh and eighth centuries. That there was a certain quantity of poetic narrative composed and preserved by the Druids in the Gaelic language, before and during the Roman occupation, is certain. Of this poetry we have no literary remains, unless fragments of it exist in the north-western peninsula. Had this Druidic verse no legitimate successor in the popular esteem, which has perished,

<sup>1</sup> " Taillefer ki moult bien cantout  
 Sur un roussin qui tot alout  
 Devant li dus alout cantant  
 De Kalermaine e de Rolant,  
 E d'Oliver et des vassals  
 Ki moururent à Roncevals."

even from history, more completely than the memorial records of the Gauls and Celts? There have been some writers, at all events, who have found, in the earlier parts of the epic of the *Loherains*, traditions of the invasion of Attila and the Huns (A.D. 451). The facts correspond, whilst the names may have been changed; and a literary instinct will not be able to pass over as insignificant the fact that the author of this poem, referring to the plunder of the Christian clergy in order to pay the barbarian soldiers, justifies Attila for his conduct in this respect. That the epic itself was written at disjointed periods of time is probable from internal evidence. Thus, the enemies of the French, who are at first described as "Wandles," Vandals, appear later on as Saracens. It is distinctly an epic of national heroism opposed to invasion; the spirit is uniform throughout, but the character of the incident varies. Be it observed, moreover, that an epic of the eleventh century, dealing professedly or implicitly with events of the fifth, may have been original so far as the words were concerned, whilst it was *retrouvé* rather than *trouvé*, based upon a foregoing epic in an archaic tongue, which a scholar or learned priest alone was able to decipher.

### § 5. THE CARLOVINGIAN CYCLE.

In the time of Charlemagne the Saracens had begun to press heavily upon the outposts of Christian Europe, and whilst the typical hero of the *Chansons de Geste* was a Christian knight, his typical foe was a Saracen. The instinct of the *trouvères* led them persistently away from the exploits of Charlemagne in the north and east, and centred the interest of their poems in the campaigns, historical or traditional, of himself, his knights, and his successors, against the Mussulman invaders of Spain and the south of Europe. Of the three-and-thirty undoubted expeditions of Charlemagne only



one, which was not undertaken against the Saracens, is celebrated by Jean Bodel in the *Chanson des Saxons*, of which the hero is Witikind. Historical accuracy was sacrificed to the taste of the hearers and the fashion of the trouvères; and, no doubt, many a deed of prowess, wrought by the great Emperor and his followers on the banks of the Rhine and the Oder, was remodelled and transferred by the complaisant poets to the plains of Septimania or the defiles of the Pyrenees. Not only thus are honours thrust upon Charlemagne to which he himself never aspired, but he is credited now and again with the acts of his predecessors, and even of his descendants. Yet more, according to a later writer, possibly a monk, Charlemagne and his twelve knights<sup>1</sup> went to the Holy City itself, and sat in the temple of Jerusalem; miracles were performed in their honour, and they returned laden with relics for the Abbey of Saint Denis.

The *Chanson de Roland*, the best known, the longest, and incomparably the finest epic dealing with Charlemagne and the Saracens, illustrates very aptly the best features of the early national poetry of the *Langue d'Oïl*.<sup>2</sup> It was probably the work of more than one hand, for the plot bears evidence of having been extended from point to point. The work of the first trouvère was no doubt conterminous with the song of Roland which Taillefer sang before William of Normandy; but the epic as we now have it, as it was discovered at Oxford

<sup>1</sup> Probably an Arthurian reminiscence. Alexander and several other heathen kings have been gifted by the trouvères with twelve peers. In Warton's *History of English Literature*, ed. Hazlitt, vol. ii., p. 197, Mr. Shelly observes—"It is worth while remarking how entirely the meaning of the title given to the peers has been lost by the English poets. . . . We read of the 'twelve dussypere' (les douze pairs), and in other places we find each single knight called 'a dozeper,' while in the Ashmole MS. of *Sir Ferumbras* the word becomes 'doththeper.'"

<sup>2</sup> According to M. Léon Gautier, *Epopées Françaises*, only one poem of the Carolingian cycle, the *Chanson de Roland*, was written at the end of the eleventh century, twenty-two belong to the twelfth, nearly fifty to the thirteenth, and seven to the two following centuries.

and first printed in 1837, goes far beyond the death of Roland and Oliver. We add a brief summary of the events, which are recounted, of course, with a *minimum* of historical accuracy, in this interesting epic.<sup>1</sup>

The Saracen Marsillus, King of Spain, renamed in by Charlemagne's army round Saragossa, sends to the Emperor a petition for peace. Charlemagne, by advice of Roland, despatches his answer by Ganelon, who, hating the task, and probably inspired by previous antipathy to his brother knight, resolves to betray him. He returns from Marsillus laden with rich presents, and bearing the full submission of the Saracens, on condition that Charlemagne shall retire into France. The Emperor, not without misgivings and sinister dreams, consents, and Ganelon contrives that Roland shall be in command of the rear-guard of the French army, which was, in fact, the post of honour. But he had plotted with Marsillus that the Saracen host should treacherously fall upon this rear-guard in the mountain passes, whilst Charlemagne was far ahead with the bulk of the army.

With Roland were Oliver and Archbishop Turpin ; and on this battlefield *par excellence* of Middle Age chivalry the Church figures side by side with the sword. Christianity has its triumphs as grand as those of war. Here also the hand of the *clerc-trouvère* is to be recognised. Long is the unequal struggle maintained between the twenty thousand French and the innumerable pagans who pour down the mountain-side from every cleft and defile. Roland refuses to summon Charlemagne to his assistance ; Oliver dies by his side ; his gallant friends are hewn down ; the good archbishop blesses those who fight and those who die, until he also breathes his

<sup>1</sup> There exists in French a prose romance, published first in 1486, about the deeds of Charlemagne, and called *Fierabras*, translated from the Latin, and also remodelled from an older French romance in verse, which, according to M. Gaston Paris, *Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne*, is even, at the present time, reprinted in a more or less disfigured form at Epinal and at Montbéliard for popular circulation.

last; and, finally, Roland himself, who cannot break his famous sword *Durandal*, places it underneath him, as well as his horn, and shares the lot of his friends, who cover the glorious battlefield.

But before he died he had sounded his miraculous horn, and Charlemagne, who was thirty leagues ahead, heard the ominous note, and returned. Ganelon would have dissuaded him, but the Emperor, for all reply, ordered the traitor to be bound hand and foot. He reached the field only to find the completeness of the Saracens' success, and, after obtaining from God that the day should be prolonged, in order that the fight may last the longer, he pursues the pagans and drives them into the *Ebro*. Marsillus, at the point of death, cedes his kingdom to Baligant, Emir of Babylon, who had arrived for the purpose of succouring him. But Charlemagne, who had returned to *Roncevaux*, and collected the remains of his faithful servants, hears of Baligant's approach, turns upon him, and destroys the second Saracen host. This latter portion of the epic is related at great length, and includes a long enumeration of the opposing hosts, bringing to mind the like feature in the Homeric poems. It is full of incident and episode, and it ends with the honourable interment of the heroes of *Roncevaux*, and with the punishment of the traitor Ganelon. The whole epic is charged with Christian as well as warlike fervour, and deals largely in the miraculous and the supernatural.

The passage between Roland and Oliver, when they first become aware of the treachery which has been practised upon them, is sufficiently fine to be quoted as an example of the spirit and language of the poem, which may with probability be ascribed to the eleventh century :—

“ Oliver has climbed upon a lofty hill,  
Looks to the right along the grassy valley ;  
He sees approach the Saracen army,  
And thus addresses Roland, his comrade :—

‘From Spain I see (hear) come such a noise,  
So many white hauberks, so many dazzling helmets!  
Here our French will feel great rage.  
Ganes knew it, the felon, the traitor  
Who induced us before the Emperor (to go in the rear).’  
‘Be silent, Oliver,’ the valiant Roland replies—  
‘He is my father-in-law; do not say a word against him.’”

The two paladins had not always been friends; their reconciliation had been effected by a supernatural agency. In their youth they had met in mortal combat. “The fight endures for a whole day, the two horses of the knights lie cut to pieces at their feet, the fire leaps from their battered breast-plates, and still the combat endures. The sword of Oliver is broken on the helmet of Roland. ‘Sire Oliver,’ says Roland, ‘go and find another, and a cup of wine, for I am sore athirst.’ A boatman brings from the town three swords and a jar of wine. The knights drink from the same cup, after which the battle begins again. About the end of the second day Roland cries, ‘I am ill; I would lie down and rest.’ But Oliver answers ironically, ‘Lie down, if you will, on the green grass; I will rip you open to cool you.’ Then Roland rejoins in a loud voice, ‘Vassal, I said it to prove you; I would gladly fight still another four days without eating or drinking.’ Accordingly the combat proceeds.” At length a cloud sinks down from heaven between the two champions, and from the cloud there comes an angel. He salutes the two French knights, and in the name of God bids them be at peace, and reserve their prowess for the misbelievers at Roncevaux. They obey, trembling with awe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Several early English romances, which are more or less imitations of the French, relate to Charlemagne. They are *Roland* (probably written in the thirteenth century), edited by Mr. Thomas Wright, at the end of M. Michel's edition of *La Chanson de Roland*; *Otuel*, edited by Mr. Ellis for the Abbotsford Club; *Charlemagne and Roland*, which exists only in scattered fragments, and has partly been edited by Mr. Ellis in his *Otuel*; *Flourbas*,



Another part of the poem describes how Roland, perceiving that a battle with the treacherous Saracens is inevitable, and having rejected Oliver's last entreaties to sound his horn and summon the Emperor to their aid, exhorts his friend to fight worthily, as the vassal of a worthy lord. "For one's lord," he says, "one must suffer great evils, and endure great cold and great heat; one must lose for him both blood and flesh." / The *Chanson de Roland* is distinguished from the other *Chansons de Geste* by this loftier conception of the feudal relations; and it contains no word derogatory to the dignity of the Emperor. This is another proof, if it were needed, of the early date of the epic.

With the mixture of fervent Christian piety and unquestioning credulity, another explanation of the supernatural element in the poems of the more learned trouvères may perhaps be associated; namely, unconscious imitation of the epics of Greece and Rome. It is by no means improbable that the author of the first part of the *Chanson de Roland* was acquainted with the *Æneid*; or, perhaps, even a later hand in the twelfth or thirteenth century interpolated the matter-of-fact description of the "conscia terra," which we append.

"The battle is marvellous and severe.

Very well strike there Oliver and Roland.

The archbishop (Turpin) more than a thousand blows there returns.

The twelve peers are not slow,

And the French there strike as one.

Died there pagans by thousands and hundreds.

No one, unless he runs away from death, escapes.

Whether they will it or not all there leave life.

of which two versions exist, one analysed by Mr. Ellis, the other published for the Early English Text Society. I have abridged this list from one given in Warton's *History of English Literature*, ed. Hazlitt, vol. ii. p. 195, *et passim*.

The French lose there their best booty.  
 They shall never see again their parents or their relatives,  
 Nor Charlemagne who awaits them at the gorges.  
 In France there rages a most wonderful storm;  
 Now is heard there thunder and wind.  
 Rain and hoar frost tremendously  
 Fall there, and thunder, quickly and often  
 The earth quakes there truly,  
 From Saint Michel, at Paris, unto Sens,  
 From Besançon unto the harbour of Wissant,  
 There is no abode of which the walls do not crack.  
 Southwards there is great darkness;  
 It only becomes clear when the Heaven is cleft.  
 No one sees it who is not much frightened;  
 Several say: 'This is the end,  
 The end of the age in which we are now.'  
 They do not know and do not speak the truth:  
 It is the great grief for the death of Roland."<sup>1</sup>

This last line is very fine. The whole of Nature is throbbing, full of woe and mourning for the death of a doughty paladin, showing its sorrow by earthquakes, tempests, thunder, and lightning:—"It is the great grief for the death of

<sup>1</sup> We give the above lines of the *Chanson de Roland* (ed. Muller) in the original:—

"La bataille est merveilluse e pesant,  
 Mult ben i fiert Oliver et Rollant,  
 Li arcevesques (Turpin) plus de mil colps i rent,  
 Li XII. pers ne s'en targent nient,  
 E li Franceis i fierent cum unement.  
 Moerent paen à milliers e à ceenz;  
 Ki ne s'en fuit de mort n'i ad guarent,  
 Voillet o nun, tuti laissez sun tens.  
 Franceis i perdent lor meilleurs garnemenz,  
 Ne reverrunt lor peres ne lor parenz,  
 Ne Carlemagne ki as porz les atent.  
 En France en ad mult merveillus turment,  
 Oreiz i ad de teneire e de vent,  
 Pluies e greiz desmesurement,  
 Chiedent i fuillres e menut e suvent;  
 E terre moete co i ad veirement

Roland." Does it not remind us of the mythical complaint of nature, "Pan is dead"?

One of the grandest of all the early French epics, is the *Roman des Loherains*—"the Lorrainers"—which probably dates as far back as the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> It is an epic of feudal society; and as such it deserves particular attention, as illustrating in a remarkable manner the institutions and customs of feudalism in France.

The empire of Charlemagne was divided and subdivided amongst his children and their successors, whose power over their subjects diminished with the extent of their possessions. Their barons frequently exercised more real authority than themselves; the *leudes* repeatedly asserted their right of electing the occupant of the throne. Feudal privileges were perhaps, in France, more often exacted by the barons from a vainly-resisting monarch than voluntarily bestowed by the latter upon the former; and the later *trouvères*, always depending for their most valuable patronage upon the noble and wealthy families, adopted their views and championed their cause. The second period of the national epic is mainly composed of *chansons*, wherein the contests, rebellions, triumphs, and virtues of the great barons are celebrated at the expense of the monarch—Charlemagne himself not excepted. The

De seint Michel de Paris josqu' as Seinz,  
De Besençun tresqu' as (porz) de Guitsand,  
N'en ad recet dunt li mur ne cravent ;  
Cuntre midi tenebres i ad granz  
N'i ad clartet se li (cels) nen i fent.  
Hume ne l' veit ki mult ne s'espaent ;  
Dient plusor : 'Ço est li definement,  
La fin del secle ki nus est en présent.'  
Il ne le sevent ne dient veir nient :  
Ço est li granz dulors por la mort de Rollant.'

<sup>1</sup> M. Paulin Pâris published in 1833-5 *Li Romans de Garin le Loherain*, etc., 2 vols. Most of the twenty manuscripts consulted date from the twelfth century, and disagree in their texts, probably through the caprices of the *trouvères*. They are written, moreover, in different dialects of the *langue d'oïl*.

feudal relations of the Emperor with his greater vassals are recorded<sup>1</sup> in many romances in this spirit. *Les Loherains* probably owes its authorship to more than one mind, and virtually covers events of more than one century. But it gives us a clearer view than any other *chanson* of the growth of feudal authority. The weakness of the king, Pepin, is implied the more naturally and delicately, inasmuch as he is represented as an infant; and the anti-monarchical prejudice is toned down by the fact that, when he grows up, he sides with the victorious party in the long feud which provides the action of the epic. This feud rages between the Lorrainers and the Picards—Germans and Frenchmen. The former are eventually triumphant; and the partiality of the successive authors of the poem is displayed for them throughout. Indeed *Les Loherains* is, in spirit, rather a Teutonic than a French epic. It was written, doubtless, by Germans who had adopted the French nationality, who cherished their descent from the followers of Pepin and Charlemagne, and who could not forget that their ancestors had conquered the country which was their home. To such a length is their partiality carried, that they cannot even suffer the brave leader of the vanquished party to fall in fight, but represent him as driven back into Spain, and forswearing the Christian faith. No wonder the poem was neglected when the French national spirit became harmonious and consolidated. No wonder it slept in obscurity for at least five centuries, only to be revived when the genius of literature had risen superior to feudal passion and national prejudice. Meanwhile it served, throughout its slow incubation, to gather up the manifold jealousies of the Teuton; just as the contemptuous silence concerning Teutonic prowess and success proved the deep-seated jealousies of the Gaul.

<sup>1</sup> By Huon de Villeneuve, in *Huon de Bordeaux* and in *Doon de Mayence*, by Bertans in the *Roman de Vainc*; by Raymbert and Adams le Roy in *Opier le Danois*.



The struggle between Fromont and Garin, the Lorrainer, arose out of their rivalry for the hand of Blanchefflor, the heiress of wide domains, which she had inherited from her father, the rich King "Thierris." The latter had prayed on his deathbed that she might obtain for a husband some "franc baron," who would know how to defend her and her wealth; and he thought he had provided for her best interests in affiancing her to Garin, Duke of Lorraine. This betrothal, however, was subject to the consent of Pepin, for no vassal would venture to marry a rich heiress, the owner of important fiefs, without his suzerain's consent; unless, indeed, he was prepared to throw off his allegiance and violate his oath. But Garin swore to her that, come what would, she might count upon his assistance against all her foes.

Garin was a brave and skilful warrior; his brother Bègues was yet more skilful and renowned. The "Emperor" was besieging Saint Quentin, and could not take it. Duke Garin also was under the walls; and, great as was his prowess, he could not humble the proud and obstinately-defended town. The siege must have been raised, but by good fortune Bègues, who had been absent on a long expedition, suddenly arrived in the camp. His fame had spread far and wide; his enemies trembled before him, and his friends drew new courage from his presence. The tide of fortune was turned, and the city fell. Here was glory such as the *trouvères* loved to heap upon their patrons; a vassal coming to the rescue of an Emperor, and saving him from disgrace.

Blanchefflor was not destined to fall to the lot of Garin. Pepin himself laid claim to her; and the betrothed pair submitted to his superior authority. But "The Lorrainers" is an epic of battle, not of love; and the exploits of the duke and his brother against the Picards, interspersed with episodes in the lives of the principal heroes, occupy the bulk of the poem. Terrible and ruthless are the encounters which these

old poets love to narrate; unbounded the joy which the knights take in their deadly struggles; great their courage and generosity, marred, however, now and then by the most bloodthirsty cruelty. One Lorrainer sends to Fromont the head of one of his relatives whom he had slain in battle. Again, when Guillaume de Montelin fell into the hands of Bègues, the latter, having killed Isoré de Boulogne, remembers how Guillaume had incited Isoré to cut off his opponent's head. The enraged victor, thereupon, tears out the entrails of his victim, and dashes them in Guillaume's face, crying: "There, vassal, is the heart of your cousin; now you can salt it and roast it." All this is told, of course, without apology; and it is to be observed that the deeds of the greatest cruelty are ascribed, even by Teuton writers, to the Teuton knights.

The third part of the *Roman des Loherains* was written by Jehan de Flagy, and is in many respects the most pleasing of the epic. This is especially the judgment to which one is forced after reading the passage describing the parting between Bègues and his family.

"You would have seen the castle stormed,  
And the citizens come to the walls,  
The knights arm themselves and don iron,  
For they thought they should be attacked.  
Bègues gets ready, and makes haste,  
Laces one hose, ne'er fairer aye was seen;  
Spurs they place at his heels,  
Put on a coat of mail, fasten his burnished helmet,  
And Beatrix girds on the bright steel sword,  
Yclept Floberge, with hilt of purest gold.  
'My lord,' said she, 'may God the crucified  
Guard you to-day 'gainst death and every danger!'  
The duke replied: 'My lady, you speak well.'  
He looked at her, and pity stirred his heart,  
For she had lately borne him young Gérin.  
Then spoke, 'My lady, listen now to me,

For the Lord's sake, I pray you, mind my son.'  
 She answered, 'Sire, it shall be as you wish !'  
 They brought him then a noble Arab steed,  
 He in the stirrups straight leapt from the ground ;  
 Shield round his neck ; and then he took a lance,  
 Of which the point was green and burnished steel."<sup>1</sup>

The next scene is drawn with more delicate touches still. Bègues, long separated from the brother whom he loves so much, cannot resist the desire to see him again. Garin is at Metz, Bègues at his castle of Belin, near Bordeaux ; all France lies between them, but it is not wide enough to keep these two grizzled warriors apart. The younger brother is happy in the midst of his family when the irresistible yearning comes upon him. A dozen lines of Flagg describe a scene of domestic bliss, such as Teutons in all ages have loved to paint :—

<sup>1</sup> The extracts from *Les Loherains* are slightly modernised from the original, the text of M. Demogeot being adopted :—

“ Vous eussiez vu le chastel estormir,  
 Et les bourgeois aux défenses venir,  
 Les chevaliers armer et fer-vêtir,  
 Car ils pensaient qu'on dût les assaillir.  
 Begnes s'apprête, à la hâte il le fit,  
 Lace une chausse, nul plus belle ne vit ;  
 Sur les talons lui ont éperons mis,  
 Vêt un haubert, lace un heaume bruni,  
 Et Béatrix lui ceint le brand fourbi :  
 Ce fut Floberge la belle au pont d'or fin.  
 'Sire,' fait-elle, 'Dieu qu'en la croix fut mis,  
 Vous défende lui de mort et de péril !'  
 Et dit le duc : 'Dame, bien avez dit !'  
 Il la regarde, moult grand pitié l'en prit.  
 Relevée est de nouvel de Gérin.  
 'Dame,' dit-il, 'entendez ça à mi :  
 Pour Dieu vous prie que pensiez de mon fils.'  
 Elle répond : 'Biaus sire, à vos plaisirs !'  
 On lui amène un destrier arabi,  
 De pleine terre est aux arçons salli ;  
 L'écu au col, il a un épieux pris,  
 Dont le fer fut d'un vert acier bruni.”

"One day, Bègues in castle Belin was,  
 And near him was the handsome Beatrix ;  
 The duke upon her mouth and hand a kiss impressed,  
 And then the duchess very gently smiled,  
 She saw her two boys come into the hall  
 (For so the story runs): Gérin was the eldest named,  
 Hernaudin the second was called.  
 The one was twelve, and the other ten years old ;  
 With them were six young men, all nobly born.  
 They move towards each other, run and leap,  
 And play, and laugh, and sport with many tricks." <sup>1</sup>

By and by Bègues tells Beatrix of his longing ; how,  
 moreover, he means to take his brother a present in the  
 shape of a boar's head. He has heard of a famous old boar  
 two hundred leagues away, in the forest of Valenciennes, and  
 he is determined to kill it, and carry its head to Garin.  
 Beatrix, in vain, endeavours to dissuade him : " My heart  
 tells me, and it told ever true, that if you go there you shall  
 never return." But Bègues remains firm to his purpose,  
 prepares for the chase, and is ready to be gone. Before he  
 goes he " to God commends the fair Beatrix, and Hernaudin  
 and Gérin, his two children." And the trouvère adds the  
 melancholy line, " O God ! what grief ! he never saw them  
 more ! " Bègues departs, slays the boar, and is about to  
 resume his journey, when he is treacherously killed by a band  
 of robbers whom he had previously driven from his path.

<sup>1</sup> " Un jour fut Begues au chastel de Belin :  
 Auprès de lui la belle Biatrix.  
 Le duc lui baise et la bouche et la main,  
 Et la duchesse moult doucement sourit.  
 Parmi la salle vit ses deux fils venir  
 (Ce dit l'histoire) : l'ainé eut nom Gérin,  
 Et le second s'appelait Hernaudin.  
 L'un eut douze ans, et l'autre en avait dix.  
 Sont avec eux six damoiseaux de prix,  
 Vont i un vers l'autre et coure et tressaillir  
 Jouer et rire et mener leurs deüits."



Great is the grief of his family and friends at the inglorious death of the famous warrior; and his brother Garin says, "Ah! my lord Bègues, true knight, brave and bold, terrible and merciless towards enemies, gentle and simple towards all your friends; you have lost much, Girbert, my noble son! Earth, open up to receive me, unfortunate man that I am; it would be a great pity if I were to live long!"<sup>1</sup> Garin brings the body to Beatrix, who weeps and laments over it; and the friends of the dead man cry vengeance. The young Hernaudin cries—"Heavens, why have I not a little breastplate? I would help you against your enemies." The duke heard him, and took him up in his arms, kissed his mouth and face, and said, "By God, fair nephew, you are too courageous; you are like my brother in mouth and in face, the noble duke, to whom God may grant mercy!" So they buried the hero with great solemnities, and placed upon his marble tomb the epitaph, "He was the best man who ever rode on horseback."

The spirit of Christianity breathes through these *Chansons de Geste* rather by implication, and through the virtues of chivalrous generosity and self-devotion, than by direct manifestation. In death, however, it is always present; and the headstrong, bloodthirsty men, who in their lives were so difficult to curb, and who seldom suffered a scruple to intervene between themselves and their revenge, no sooner bite the dust on a field of battle than they pluck some leaves of grass with their relaxing fingers, and symbolise to themselves

<sup>1</sup> The following passage is taken from Paulin Pâris, *Roman de Garin*, ii. p. 263, and is not modernised:—

"Ha! sire Bègues, li loherains a dit,  
Frans chevaliers, corageus et hardis!  
Fel et angris contre vos anemis,  
Et dols et simples a trestoz vos amis;  
Tant as perdu, Girbert, beau sire fils!  
Terre! car ouvre, si reçois moi, chaitis:  
Ce est damage, si je longuement vis."

with these the consecrated elements. None so humble or so superstitious in their last moments as those who, in the lust of life, defied both earthly and heavenly monarchs, like the young lord of Fauconnès, whom his dying father adjured to deliver the castle of Naisil to the enemy, and who replied defiantly—"If I had one foot in Paradise, and the other in the castle of Naisil, I would draw back the one I had in Paradise, in order to put it back in Naisil."

### § 6. THE ARTHURIAN CYCLE.

"Arthur is a present from Britain to France. M. H. de Villemarqué has placed the fact beyond doubt.<sup>1</sup> After reading the book, in which he compares with the text before him the romances of the Round Table and the ancient legends of Britain, we are convinced for example that the British legend of *Owen* preceded and inspired the romance of *Yvain*, or *Le Chevalier au Lion*. It is equally evident that *Pérelur* is the prototype of *Perceval*. We are less certain that the Mael of the British legends is the same person as the Lancelot of the romances, although Mael has in the Gaelic tongue the same signification as Lancelot, or rather Ancelot, which signifies a domestic."<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to disagree with this, so long as we make full allowance for the common origin of the Gael and Cymri of France and of the early inhabitants of Great Britain, remembering also the close relationship which subsisted for many generations between the Britons of these islands and the Bretons of Armerica. It was, indeed, the followers of King Arthur himself who, after his final reverse and death in the vain endeavour to withstand the onset of the Teutonic conquerors, in the sixth century crossed the Channel into Armo-

<sup>1</sup> In *Les Romans de la Table ronde et les Contes des anciens Bretons*.

<sup>2</sup> Gêrusez, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, vol. i. p. 68.

rica, and gave it thenceforth the name of Brittany. There they settled; and their descendants continued to wait for the return of the son of "mythic Uther," celebrating his praises in the meanwhile, and consoling their own evil fortunes, by constructing poetic legends out of their richly stored memories, or by repeating to each other the legends composed by the bards of Britain.

The best of the trouvères who contributed to the Arthurian cycle of *chansons* was Chrétien de Troyes; and his *Chevalier de la Charrette*, independent as it is in its episodes, original as it is in its manner of treatment, yet takes its principal characters from the British epic of Arthur and his Round Table. The "Knight of the Waggon" is Lancelot of the Lake, who, despatched to rescue Guinevere from the caitiff Méléagans, who had carried off the wife destined for King Arthur, loses his horse by the way, and avails himself of the waggon of a peasant. He is successful in his quest, as we know; and too successful for the subsequent happiness of Arthur and Guinevere. The poem is worthy of attention. It is "little else than a *fabliau*, in which we meet with grace and archness, and as the trouvère who composed it is a true son of Champagne, the archness is ingenuous. Chrétien de Troyes is a precursor of La Fontaine, with much of the simplicity and pungency of his narrative style. The incident of the waggon allows him to introduce a spice of comedy into a chivalric subject. In fact Lancelot can simulate cowardice and awkwardness in his passages of arms, after the manner of the English clowns, and mislead the spectators as well as his adversaries. When he shows his skill and courage, the effect is all the more telling by force of contrast. Thus he wins all hearts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Cérusez, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, vol. i. p. 72, *et passim*. Chrétien de Troyes is greatly indebted to the erudite French literary critic for the esteem in which he is held in the nineteenth century.

"And the ladies said,  
 Who looked at him with wonder,  
 That he should take them in marriage,  
 For they did not dare to trust much  
 In their beauty, nor in their riches,  
 Nor in their power, nor in their lofty birth,  
 Who neither for beauty nor for possessions,  
 Were worthy, any one of them, to have  
 This Knight, who is too valiant.  
 And nevertheless they make such vows,  
 Most of them, that they say  
 That, if to this one they are not married,  
 They will not be married this year,  
 Nor given to husband or master."<sup>1</sup>

The queen, who hears this talk, laughs in her sleeve, having  
 no reason to be troubled about it. In fact she knows that for  
 all the gold in the world "he would not take the best of them,  
 nor the most beautiful, nor the most graceful, he who pleases  
 all." Our *trouvère* can even be refined. When the queen  
 leaves Lancelot to enter her apartment, the latter would fain  
 pass in with her; but "can only accompany her with his  
 eyes and his heart,"—

"But the way of the eyes was short,  
 For the room was too near;  
 And they would have entered then  
 Very willingly, if it could have been.  
 The heart, which more is lord and master,  
 And of much greater power,  
 Did enter after her,

<sup>1</sup> "Et les demoiselles disoient,  
 Qui a merveilles l'esgardoient,  
 Que cil les tolt à marier,  
 Car tant ne s'osoient her  
 An lor biautez, n'an lor richeces,  
 N'an leur poeir, n'an lor hautesces,  
 Que por biauté ne por avoir

Deignast nule d'eles avoir  
 Cilchevaliers, que tropest prouz  
 Et ne porquant se font tex vourz  
 Les plazers d'eles, qu'eles dient  
 Que s'a cestui ne se marient  
 Ne seront onan mariees,  
 N'à mari, n'à seigneur données."



And the eyes remained without,  
Filled with tears, with the body.”<sup>1</sup>

“The Knight of the Waggon introduces several characters of the Arthurian legends, and preserves the features with which we are acquainted. Arthur is as gentle as usual, and more credulous than ever; his wife as tender and as treacherous; the seneschal Keu—in English Sir Key—no less jeering, no less presumptuous, no less unsuccessful in his undertakings; the good Gavain, ever brave, ever loyal, ever devoted, does not belie himself for a moment; Launcelot remains a model of courtesy, gallantry and fidelity; he is refined and cheerful; and if he does for this once stoop to a jest, he is not slow in compensating it. There are no new creations except the traitor Méléagans and his father Baudemagus. The character of this old king, who loves his son, who hates and seeks to counteract his treasons, is, towards this ravisher, this Paris of the British epic, a mixture of the gentleness of Priam and the wisdom of Antenor in their opposition to the ravisher of Helen. This comparison is not a fancy of criticism; it swells the list of the debts which the Middle Ages have incurred to antiquity in these poems of the Round Table, wherein have been observed the resemblance of the birth of Arthur to that of Hercules, the black sail of the vessel of Theseus to that which brings Iseult to her husband, and the precautions taken by the mother of Perceval to keep that second Achilles in ignorance and obscurity, far from the perils of war. All these reminiscences, more or less cloaked, are to be recog-

<sup>1</sup> “Mès as ials fu corte la voie  
Que trop estait la chambre près :  
Et il fussent antré après  
Molt volentiers s’il poïst estre,  
Li cuers, que plus est sire et mestre  
Et de plus grant pooir assez,  
S’an est outre après li passez,  
Et li oil sont remès defors,  
Plein de lermes, avec le cors.

nised, and ought to be dwelt upon. It is well to remember that the chain of time has never been completely broken."<sup>1</sup>

*Perceval of Wales* is another Arthurian legend, of which the French version, *Perceval le Gallois*, is attributed to Chrétien de Troyes. Perceval was the one knight who, in the quest of the Holy Graal, retained his purity of body and soul with sufficient steadfastness to secure the sacred relic from its guardian. When yet a stripling he escapes from his mother's care, and encounters three of Arthur's knights, whose noble appearance and splendid armour delight his mind and excite his curiosity to the utmost. He observes their coat of mail, and inquires of the knights if they are the God of whom his mother had spoken to him so often.

“ Then answered Sir Gawayn,  
Fair and courteously again,  
‘ Son, as Christ us sayne,  
Such are we not.’  
Then said that true knight’s child,  
Who had lived in the woods wild,  
To Gawayn the meek and mild,  
And soft of answer.  
‘ I shall slay you all three,  
If you don’t smartly now tell me  
What things or folk ye be,  
Since ye no Gods are.’  
Then answered Sir Kay,  
‘ Who then shall we say  
Slew us all to-day  
In this wild holt so bare?’  
But says Gawayn to Kay,  
‘ With thy proud words away;  
I can win this child with play  
If thou hold still.’  
‘ Sweet son,’ then said he,  
‘ We are knights all three,

<sup>1</sup> Gérusez, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, vol. I. p. 76.

With King Arthur ride we,  
 That dwells on yon hill.'  
 Then said Perceval the light,  
 In goat-skins that was dight,  
 'Will King Arthur make me knight  
 If my vows I fulfil?'  
 Then said Gawayn right there  
 'I can give thee none answer:  
 But to the King I bid thee fare  
 To learn his will.'"

The boy then leaves them, returns to his mother, and tells her he will go to the king to be knighted. She informs him that whenever he sees a knight with a "minever hood" he must doff his hood and embrace him; and she gives him a ring, which he must bring back:—

"He took the ring and took the spear,  
 Starts up upon the mare,  
 And from the mother that bore him  
 Now forth he goes to ride." <sup>1</sup>

He proves afterwards that "the child is father to the man," by becoming a perfect and stainless knight.

Several other poems have also been attributed to that sweetest of trouvères, Chrétien de Troyes, who died in the year 1191.<sup>2</sup> Jean Bodel, another trouvère, who lived in the reign of Philip Augustus,<sup>3</sup> wrote the *Chanson des Saxons*, of which the hero is Guiteclin, or Witikind, whose wife, Sebile, is of the class to which Guinevere and Iseult belong, and who has furnished those of her sex who tread in her paths with the time-worn excuse: "What is the use of woman's beauty if she does not employ it in her youth?" <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have borrowed these verses from the late Mr. Walter Thornbury's talented paraphrasing of an early English condensation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Sir Perceval of Wales*.

<sup>2</sup> These poems are: *Le Chevalier au Lion*, *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, *Érec et Énide*, *Oliget*, and *Tristan*.

<sup>3</sup> 1165-1223.

<sup>4</sup> "Que sert beauté de femme s'en jivant ne l'emploie?"

At this point we may refer to the Anglo-Norman rhyming chroniclers, such as Geoffroy Gaimar, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, and Robert Wace, the latter being the author of the *Romant de Rou* (Rollo), which is little more than a pedigree of the conquerors of Normandy. The prose writer Geoffry of Monmouth, by the encouragement of the English king, collected, about A.D. 1140, the ancient traditions of Britain. These were translated from Latin into Romance by Luces du Gast, Gasse le Blond, Walther Map, archdeacon of Oxford, Robert de Borron, Hélie de Borron,<sup>1</sup> Rusticien of Pisa, and the versions were the principal sources from which Chrétien de Troyes, his contemporaries and successors, drew the subjects of their poems. The first named of these, Lord of Gast near Salisbury, and a relative of Henry II., gives us very clear and satisfactory reasons for undertaking the task of translation.<sup>2</sup>

## § 7. THE CLASSICAL CYCLE.

It would have been strange if the *trouvères* had overlooked the great heroisms and enthusiasms of those ancient civilisations to which their nation owed so much, and in which their adopted tongue had so large and legitimate an interest. Something has already been said of the influence produced on the French national spirit by the history and literature of Greece and Rome; and the illustrations of this influence may now be copiously enlarged. Perhaps the first romance borrowed from the pages of the Greek poets was that of the life

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Pearson has tried to prove in the preface to the *San Graal*, ed. by Mr. Furnivall for the Roxburghe Club, that Robert de Borron was born in the village of Bucez, arrondissement of Chen, and was an ancestor of Lord Byron. Mr. E. Hucher, in his preface to *le Saint Graal*, 1874, maintains that the family came from the French Gâtinais, in the neighbourhood of Sens.

<sup>2</sup> Luces du Gast does not pretend to be a very good French scholar, but he says that he translates the *San Graal* from Latin into "Romans" because "*tele est ma volonte en mon proposment, que je en langue française le translaterai.*"



of Ulysses. The earliest poem on the subject in the French language is, as we have seen, Provençal; but the siege of Troy, with its numerous adventures and episodes, naturally attracted the trouvères who had bethought themselves of turning to the ancients for their themes. The first who took this history as the groundwork of his poetical embroidery was Benoît de Sainte-Maure, who lived in England under Henry Beauchere,<sup>1</sup> and who had the patience to write about thirty thousand lines, as well as another three-and-twenty thousand on the *Histoire des ducs de Normandie*; and others, both in England and France, followed in his train. The life of Alexander was still more in vogue amongst the trouvères; and in the reign of Philip Augustus,<sup>2</sup> Lambert le Court, and Alexander de Bernai, contributed to produce a *Chanson de Geste* of some literary importance, under the title of *Roman d'Alexandre*. It is in Alexandrine verse; the matter is taken chiefly from Quintus Curtius and the spurious Callisthenes; whilst the treatment is characteristically in the chivalric style, with abundance of the supernatural element. The poem might reasonably adopt as second title "The Mirror of Kings;" for it attributes to Alexander all the royal virtues which would become a monarch in the twelfth century. Thus say the writers:—

"The king who his kingdom wishes rightly to govern,  
And the duke and the count who have land to keep,  
All those ought to listen to the life of Alexander;  
For he was a Christian, there never was such a knight;  
No king was braver, or could better speak,  
Nor ever was there a man more free in giving,  
Ever since he died we never saw a man his equal."

<sup>1</sup> 1068-1135.

<sup>2</sup> 1165-1223.

<sup>3</sup> "Li rois qui son royaume veut par droit gouverner  
Et li dus et li conte qui terre ont à garder,  
Tous cil doivent la vie Alexandre escouter.  
Se il fut crestiens, onques ne fu teus ber;  
Rois ne fut plus hardis, ni mius séust parler,  
Ni onques ne fu hom plus larges de douner;  
Onques puis qu'il fu mors, ne vit nus hom son per."

The character of Alexander is clearly held up as a pattern to the kings of latter days ; and the ideal relations between suzerain and vassals—the first elevating but not detracting from the dignity of the latter—are expressed in some of the noblest, as they are the most characteristic passages of the poem. Take the following speech of Eminentus of Arcadia to his comrades, who were terrified by the approach of Gadifer amidst the noise of clarions and drums :—

“My lords, it does not become you to be frightened,  
For in our company there is no room for cowards ;  
Let each one think of the means of defending his life.  
We are all noblemen, dukes, counts, and princes ;  
Therefore we ought to do much, to suffer much, to act much,  
So that no one shall be able, after us, to reproach our heirs.  
He who does not behave well here, ought henceforth not to eat  
At the table of the king whom we love so dearly.  
The blade of this sword does not wish to rest  
Before I see it bathed in the brain (of the enemy).  
To-day I wish to develop the battle and the mêlée ;  
Let each one think to do well ; I shall begin the game.”<sup>1</sup>

We cannot but turn back in our minds to the speech of Roland to Oliver, before the battle of Roncevaux ; and certainly the later passage does not pale in loftiness of thought before the earlier one. Nor is this the only reminiscence

<sup>1</sup> “Seigneur, ne vous caut esmaier,  
Car en nostre compaignie n'ont li covant mestier.  
Peust aucuns que il puist sa vie calengier.  
Fout sommes gentil homme, due et conte et princier ;  
Si devons tant faire, pener et exploier  
C'en ne l'puist après nous, à nos oïrs reprocher :  
Que ei ne fera bien, puis ne devra mangier  
A la table le roi que nous avoines cier.  
Li brans de ceste espée ne se vint estancier  
De si que jon le voie en cervelle baigrier.  
Hui mais voel la betaille et l'esser surhancier ;  
Peust cescuns de bien faire ; le jeu voel commencer.”

which the reader will acknowledge, as he hears of the great prowess of Alexander and his twelve chivalrous knights.<sup>1</sup>

### § 8. SATIRICAL POEMS.

Has satire its birth in love? and is it by satirising ourselves that we learn to satirise others? Certainly it is in the love-songs of France, the amorous *chansons* of the north and the amative ditties of the south, that we discover the first gleams of literary archness. The lover's jealousy of himself would supply the readiest motive; his jealousy of others would speedily do the rest. Out of the well-spring of delight comes the drop of bitterness. Every lover's compliment is a self-despite.

After love, religion; and it is hard to say which of the two provided the aptest excuse for satire. *Flore la Courtisane* was not a pretty name for a bishop; but under that name a certain Deacon John, the archbishop's favourite, created Bishop of Orléans by favour of the king's mistress, Bertrade de Montfort, was the subject of many a pleasant rhyme in the eleventh century. He was consecrated on the feast of the Innocents; a day on which religious Frenchmen had already been wont to relax both tongue and pen. So one of the clergy wrote,<sup>2</sup> "We elect a boy, observing the feast of the boys; not in accordance with our custom, but with the royal behests." The time came when the clergy in France had reason to wince at the pleasantries of others; but they began by being merry amongst themselves. *Landri* was also a

<sup>1</sup> There exist several other *chansons* about Alexander, such as *la Vengeance d'Alexandre*, *le Testament d'Alexandre*, *Signification de la mort d'Alexandre*, *le Roman de Cassanus*, *le Parfait du Paon*, and *le Restor du Paon*. Some of the earlier trouvères had even sung the fabulous adventures of Alexander's father, Philip of Macedonia.

<sup>2</sup> Eligimus puerum, puerorum festa colentes;  
Non nostrum morem, sed regia jussa sequentes.

famous satirical *chanson* written by a priest. King Robert had divorced his wife ; the country was under an interdict ; and the blame was put upon Count Landri of Auxerre, the reputed lover of the queen. Neither clergy nor people saw why they should be under interdict because Robert had parted with his wife, whom they believed to be unworthy of him ; so they sang the song of Landri throughout the country, and even jested at the expense of the Pope. One of Abelard's disciples, Hilarius, wrote a chorus *de Papa Scholastico* ; having, of course, the additional incitement of his master's condemnation by Rome. This, too, is in Latin, though it has a Romance refrain.

“ To give to the Pope is no disgrace ;  
 Shame to him who gives not.  
 The Pope, having a fancy, deceives man and woman,  
 The Pope takes what he will to his bed,  
 The Pope passes over neither man nor woman.  
 Give to the Pope, for the Pope enjoins it ;  
 Shame to him who gives not.” <sup>1</sup>

We shall find more of this kind later on, for the French genius greedily caught the infection.

The north had other ample justifications for the employment of this two-edged blade of literature. “ There life is hard and laborious, the social distinctions are deeply marked. At the top a haughty aristocracy, powerful, oppressive, which cannot forget its conquest ; beneath, the vast crowd of tributaries, serfs, victims. There the townsman is less rich, less dignified, less full of himself, than in the south ; but if he has

<sup>1</sup> “ *Papae dari non est injuria ,  
 Tort a qui ne li done.  
 Papa captus hunc vel hanc decipit,  
 Papa quid vult in lectum recipit,  
 Papa nullum vel nullam excipit,  
 Papae detur, nam Papa praecepit ;  
 Tort a qui ne li done.* ”



more misery he will have more malice. Look at the old towns of the north ; theirs are not the stone cities of Languedoc and Provence, nor the merchants' embattled towers, nor the luxury of eastern commerce. No ; but low and humble cots, built of wood, with their disgraceful sheds and their gables staring awkwardly down on the streets. Petty workmen, petty shopkeepers, often also petty minds, embittered by suffering, and for that reason more apt to speak ill, and to look at things on their narrow and ridiculous side. These poor folks will be none the less for that the fathers of the *communes*, the saviours of France at Brenneville. They sweat, they suffer, pour forth their money with a groan, and, if need be, their blood, to secure a spark of liberty, to have a bell to themselves, the great tongue of the city. And what a pleasure by night, when all is well closed, when the fire crackles on the hearth, what a pleasure, before a mug of cider or claret, to make merry at the expense of the lord whose black and threatening castle rises beside them ! On this soil are to flourish all the graces, the simplicities, and the archness of the Gallic spirit."<sup>1</sup> Champagne, Normandy, Picardy, were especially the provinces wherein the more comic and satirical vein of French literature first displayed itself, and where also the bitterest side of the French character was impressed upon the *trouvères*.

Thibaut IV., Count of Champagne, a knight who had perforce followed the King of France in the ruthless expedition against the Albigenses,<sup>2</sup> was bitterly ashamed of his part in the bloody work, and earned partly his absolution by denouncing it in burning words :—

“ They are clergymen who have left their sermons  
To wage war and to kill the people ;  
Never in God did such men believe.  
Our head makes all the limbs to suffer . . .

<sup>1</sup> Lenient, *La Satire en France au Moyen Âge*.

<sup>2</sup> 1225.

Hypocrites cause the age to stagger . . .

They have taken away joy, and pleasure, and peace.”<sup>1</sup>

We have seen already that the war against the Albigenses had aroused the ire of the troubadours. An epoch of French literature commences with these persecutions and these poetic protests. From that time forward, the corruptions of the Church were never without a satirist.

Thibaut deserves another word before we leave him. He was a kind of French Fitz-Osbert; a nobleman who roundly accused the barons of causing half the ills of their country; a democratic aristocrat who could sing:—

“In the time full of felony,  
Of envy and of treason,  
Of wrong and of contempt,  
Without good and without courtesy,  
And when between us barons we make  
The whole age grow worse,  
When I see excommunicated  
Those who give the most cause  
Then wish I to sing a song.”<sup>2</sup>

Of course he fell into great disfavour, and as he had a more tender side to his character than is above displayed, he was

<sup>1</sup> “Ce est des clers qui ont laisié sermons  
Pour gerroier et pour tuer les gens;  
Jamais en Dieu ne fust tels homes créans,  
Notre chief fait tous les membres doloir . . .  
Papelars font li siècle chanceler . . .  
Ils ont tolu joie, et solas et pais.”

The “chief” was Pope Innocent III. The “clers” and “papelars” were the Cistercians and Dominicans, who preached the “Holy war” against the Albigenses.

<sup>2</sup> Au tens plein de félonie,  
D’envie et de traison,  
De tort et de mesprise,  
Sans bien et sans cortoisie,  
Et que entre nos barons faisons

Toit le siècle empirier,  
Que je vois escumenier  
Ceux qui plus offrent raison,  
Lors veul dire une chançon.

attacked on that side. He wished to retire to his estates, but the king would not permit him. Shortly afterwards, Louis VIII. died at Montpensier,<sup>1</sup> and there were instant accusations against Thibaut of having poisoned him. Blanche of Castile, the dowager queen, became regent ; she had not been popular before, and Thibaut had, in his verses at least, manifested great tenderness for her. Both became the mark for rancour, variously expressed by word and by act. Hue de la Ferté, fond of rhyming and fighting, assailed Thibaut with bitterness, and did not even spare the mother of Saint Louis, against whom little can be alleged except the indiscretions of her admirer. In one of his *chansons* Hue wrote :—

“ Count Thibaut, all covered with envy,  
Laden with felony,  
For chivalry  
You are in no way renowned,  
On the contrary, you are better formed  
To know surgery ;”<sup>2</sup>

meaning of course the surgery of poison. In a later *chanson* he addresses the young Louis, exhorting him to cast off the domination of priests and women, and rely on his barons, who would aid him in driving out the English :—

“ Make the clergymen to go  
And sing in their churches.  
King, the prophecy  
Spoken does not lie,  
That such a woman knows to hurt  
Who knows to love her barons.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1226.

<sup>2</sup> “ Quens Tibaut, doré d’envie  
De félonie frété,  
De faire chevalerie  
N’estes vos mie alosé,  
Ainçois estes mieux mollés  
A savoir de sirurgie.”

<sup>3</sup> “ Faites les clers aler  
En lor église chanter.  
Rois, la prophécie  
Qu’on dit ne ment mie,  
Que feme sut ceus grever  
Qui ses barons sot amer.”

Thibaut has yet to be studied in another phase of his character; he encouraged the Crusades, and went himself to the Holy Land. He wrote several lays full of religious fervour,<sup>1</sup> of one of which we give two stanzas:—

“Take him, O Lord! who shall go  
To that land where God died and lived;  
But those who will not take the cross to go beyond the sea  
Shall scarcely ever go to paradise.  
But such as have compassion, and remember  
Our mighty Lord, should seek for vengeance  
And free his land and his country. . . .  
God for us suffered on the cross,  
And shall say on that day, to which all must come,  
‘Ye, who have helped to bear the rood for me,  
Ye to that place shall go where angels dwell,  
You shall see me there, the Holy Virgin too;  
And ye, by whom I never had aid  
Descend ye all into the deep of hell!’ ”<sup>2</sup>

Queen Blanche lives in another famous but anonymous poem of the same or immediately succeeding age; being pilloried as Dame Hersent, the brazen wife of Wolf Ysengrin, in the *Roman de Renart*. This *fabliau*, this burlesque poem, this

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Dante, in his *Inferno*, c. xxii. calls him for this reason “*buon re Tebaldo*.”

<sup>2</sup> “Signor, sachiez, ki or ne s'en ira  
En cele terre, u Diex fu mors et vis,  
Et ki la crois d'outre mer ne prendra,  
A paines mais ira en paradis:  
Ki a en soi pitié et ramembrance  
Au haut Seigneur, doit querre sa vengeance,  
Et délivrer sa terre et son pais . . .  
Diex se laissa por nos en crois pener,  
Et nous dira au jour, ou tuit venront,  
‘Vos, ki ma crois m'aidates à porter,  
Vos en irez là, ou li Angele sont,  
Là me verrez, et ma Mere Marie;  
Et vos, par qui je n'oi onques aie,  
Descendez tuit en infer le parfont.’ ”



epic *pour rire*, however we may prefer to describe it, though of German origin, became at once vastly popular in France, and was translated before many years had passed into almost all the languages of western Europe. The reason was that satire, from being an instinct and a necessity in the Middle Ages, was becoming an art. The conditions of society, ecclesiastical corruption and public opinion, were much the same in each country, and France did but lead the van in this particular method of attacking grave and undisputed evils. The Church itself set the example of this new species of warfare which it was destined to find so formidable, and the temptation to indulge in satire was yielded to in religious ceremonies and in the sacred edifices almost as freely as in *serventes* and *fabliaux*. Sculptors did not hesitate to adorn the cathedrals with all the quaint devices which a riotous imagination could suggest. Picture a venerable priest expounding the sacred texts to his lighthearted congregation from the cathedral pulpit at Strasburg, and striving to gain their attention and good humour by coarse jests and questionable allusions. Staring him in the face from the capital of a column opposite, he would be able every now and then to refresh his mind and stimulate his imagination by the sight of an ass performing the sacrament of the mass, with other animals standing round to assist him ; whilst in another place he might detect a priest, with the head of a fox, ensconced in the pulpit ; not to speak of the carved representations of a hundred trivial and licentious acts. If this was the limit which the Church imposed upon itself, what wonder if the man of letters adopted a similar plan, without much caring where he drew the line !

The apologue of the fox and his companions, *Goupil le Renard*,<sup>1</sup> was added to from time to time, until at last it

<sup>1</sup> "Vulpes Reginarus" would represent the primary forms of the two names.

formed a gigantic story of four-and-twenty thousand verses.<sup>1</sup> The entire satirical faculty of more than a century may be considered to have been concentrated in this popular and highly edifying *fabliau*. It is, in effect, an epic satire on feudal society, which never failed, in any age, to provide original types of Isengrin the wolf, Tibert the cat, Renard the fox, and—let us be candid—Noble the lion. Throughout the whole romance we never lose sight of the central figure of Renard, impersonation of cunning holding its own against force, who, losing his individuality whilst retaining his spirit, reappears in succeeding generations as the familiar Scapin or Mascarille. It is probable enough that the original fable had a German source, as Jacob Grimm has maintained; but the fact remains that the earliest manuscripts date only from the twelfth century, and that they are in the language of northern France.

The roman of *Renard* comprises some thirty different stories, whereof the authorship of no more than four is known. Two are the works of Pierre de Saint-Cloud, one of the curé de la Croix en Briç, the other of Richard de Lison. Much, however, of the best poetry and the most striking situations is due to the anonymous *trouvères*, from one of whom we may borrow a short passage. Chautecler, having lost a daughter by the treachery of Renard, complains to the king of the beasts, who, moved with pity, sets his court trembling by his rage, “quant beaire oïrent lor seigneur.” He vows vengeance against the murderer, and sends Bruin the bear, Tibert the cat, and Guimbert the badger, one after the other, to summon him to Court. The first two return unsuccessful, and in sorry plight; the third is more fortunate, and brings the culprit with him. A dozen accusers are eager to heap

<sup>1</sup> *Le Contement de Renard, Renard le Nouvel, Renard contrefait, Renard le Bouteux.*

charges upon Renard, who in the end is condemned to be hanged.

“On a high hill, upon a rock,  
 The king sets up the gallows-tree  
 To hang Renart the fox.  
 There was he in great peril ;  
 The ape made a grimace at him,  
 Gave him a great blow on the cheek.  
 Renart looks behind him,  
 Sees that more than three are coming on him.  
 One drags him, the other pushes him,  
 No wonder if his heart misgives him.  
 Coward the hare threw stones at him  
 From afar, but did not come near.  
 At the stones that Coward threw  
 Renart shook his head.  
 Coward thereat was so alarmed  
 That he was no more seen.  
 He was dismayed by the gesture he had seen,  
 Then hid he himself in a hedge.  
 From thence, it is said, he watched  
 What punishment might overtake him.”<sup>1</sup>

The crafty Renard escapes death by volunteering to go to the Holy Land. Doubtless the fable was true to the life ; but he only intends to trick the king, as he has tricked so many of his subjects. Once free, he shuts himself in his castle at

<sup>1</sup> “Sor un haut mont en un rochier  
 Fet li rois les forches drecier,  
 Por Renart pendre le Gorpil.  
 Estes le vos en grant péril.  
 Li singes li a fet la moe,  
 Grant coup li done lez la joe.  
 Renart regarde arere soi,  
 Voit que i viegnent plus de troi ;  
 Li un le trait, l'autre le bote,  
 N'est merveille seil se dote.

Coars li lievres l'arochoit  
 De loin, que pas ne l'aprochoit.  
 A l'arochier qu'a fet coart  
 En a crollé le chief Renart.  
 Coarz en fu si esperdüz  
 Que onques puis ne fu véüz ;  
 Del signe qu'ot véü, s'esmaie,  
 Lors s'est muchez en une haie :  
 D'ilor, ce dist, es gardera  
 Quel justise l'en en fera.”

Malpertuis, whither Noble, the lion, comes to besiege him. Renard is taken in a sortie, but again makes shift to escape his doom, and lives to thrive and cheat again, and to create incidents for many other pleasant episodes in his career.



## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. THE DECLINE OF THE TROUVÈRES.

THE reign of Saint Louis<sup>1</sup> marks an important epoch in the history, language, and literature of France. Grandson of Philip Augustus, son of the noble Queen Blanche of Castile, whom Thibaut of Champagne chose to commemorate in so equivocal a manner, Louis IX. succeeded his weak father at the age of twelve, and might, but for his heroic mother, have succumbed to the determined opposition which he found arrayed against him. The haughty barons had for some time past been growing more and more alarmed by the gradually increasing authority of the kings of France, and the year before Louis VIII. died—poisoned, as his friends gave out, by Thibaut—Pierre de Dreux, regent of Brittany, had made a league with the English, in the hope of restoring the waning influence of his order. Not more than four or five great feudatories stood by the young monarch; but his own nobility of character, his piety and tact, the wisdom of the dowager queen, and the fidelity of his friends, sufficed to overcome all opposition. Nevertheless it was not until sixteen years had passed that the barons finally abandoned their efforts to overthrow him. Before he died he had beaten the English more than once in the open field; he had placed his brother Alphonse, Count of Poitiers, in the lordship of Poitou and Auvergne; he had established his younger brother,

<sup>1</sup> He reigned from 1226 until 1270, and was only eleven years old when he came to the throne.

Charles of Anjou, in Provence; he had fought in two Crusades; he had brought to a close the sanguinary religious wars in the south; and he had done more to pave the way for a united and powerful France than any of his predecessors. It was during his reign that the Romance tongue was discouraged and the Romance literature of the troubadours began to fall into oblivion; and it was in his reign likewise that the French of the north became gradually acknowledged as the master tongue of the whole country, whilst its literature as steadily deteriorated.

We have seen how far Thibaut of Champagne departed from the spirit of the older trouvères, and how much his audacious and occasionally ribald verse—I do not speak of his religious lays—contrasted with the dignity of the epic cycles, and with the purity of the Court of Saint-Louis. We have seen how the quaint poem of *Renard* and the earlier *fabliaux* had begun to depress the character of the literature which is associated with the *langue d'oïl* in its primary periods. Let us turn to a poem of a trouvère of the decadence, a poem of great exquisiteness in style and treatment, with a subject to some extent moulded upon a classical model wholly profane and worldly—the *Roman de la Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris.<sup>1</sup> It is an *Ars Amandi*, couched in the allegorical language of a Middle-Age morality, in form a romance, but in reality a didactic poem on the art of successful love. Its impersonations recall to mind the entities and quiddities of the schoolmen; its nomenclature anticipates, as it may have contributed to suggest, the characters of the *Faery Queen*; its plan and treatment are not dissimilar to those of the *Flower and the Leaf*. We are scarcely able from beginning to end to pass from the domain of ideas to that of actual persons and things; the *theory* is present with us throughout, and we are conscious that the author does not himself succeed in translat-

<sup>1</sup> Died about 1260.

ing it into practice. It is manifest that we cannot exaggerate the importance of a poem such as this, which in a manner links the ideas of the Classical age with the ideas of the Renaissance, and in particular with the ideas of the Renaissance in England, and of its great precursor Chaucer.

The allegory itself is slight. Guillaume travels in a dream towards the Garden of Love, presided over by Pleasure. On its lofty walls are represented Hate, Disloyalty, Avarice, Villany, Greed, Envy, Sadness, Old Age, Hypocrisy, Poverty, to signify that there is no admission for such. The only entrance is by a small gate, whereat the votary of Love knocks timidly. It is opened by Leisure, who admits the applicant on the strength of his prepossessing appearance. Inside he finds Pleasure, Mirth, Love; and in the place of honour Beauty, Wealth, Jollity, Liberality, Frankness, Courtesy, and Youth. The lover is ravished by sweet sights and sounds; he wanders amongst the beautiful flowers which embellish the garden. At the fountain of Narcissus he learns to shun the fate of him who made light of the power of Love; and whilst he is penetrated by this thought he comes upon the Rose, emblem of loveliness, and his heart is subdued. Love himself now pierces the prostrate youth with his arrows, and gains in him a new subject. The conqueror instructs his victim in the art of gaining the object of his desires, and the lover's first efforts are encouraged by Good Reception. But Authority<sup>1</sup> frowns upon him, and Reason vainly tries to inspire the lover with his frigid philosophy. Good Reception enables him to elude Authority, and contrives an interview. This first success brings him into new trouble, for Jealousy comes between him and the Rose, and even casts Good Reception into prison. And there the allegory, so far as

<sup>1</sup> *Dangier* in the original—the same root from which we have “domain” and “dungeon”—meant “power” or “jurisdiction.” The lover's enemy is the father, the duenna, those to whom the object of his passion pertains, and who oppose his suit.

Guillaume de Lorris conceived it, leaves the dreamer sighing at the foot of the tower where his friend is in durance. The break is an abrupt one, and it is impossible for us to feel certain whether it was made designedly by the author or caused by his early death, or whether the original continuation has been lost. Forty years later, at the instigation of Philip the Fair,<sup>1</sup> the *Roman de la Rose* was completed by Jean de Meung, who, as we shall find, had virtues of his own, but who did not succeed in catching the spirit, perhaps not even the idea, of his predecessor.

To Guillaume de Lorris and his successors there can be no doubt that Chaucer owed much of his inspiration ; and the style of the *Roman de la Rose* every now and again brings forcibly to the mind of the reader some of his happiest reminiscences of the English poet, who wrote more than a century later. The very opening of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* would almost seem to have been modelled upon the first few lines of the older poem.

“ Whan that Aprile with his showres swote  
The drought of Marche hath perced to the rote . . .  
Whan Zephirus eek with his swote breeth  
Enspired hath in every holte and heeth  
The tendre croppes . . .  
And smale fowles maken melodie,  
That slepen all the night with open yhe,  
So priketh hem nature in here corages.” . . .

The *Roman de la Rose* opens in a somewhat similar vein:—

“ El tems amoureux plein de joie,  
El tems où tote riens s'esgaie,  
Que l'en ne voit boisson ne haie  
Qui en mai parer ne se voille  
Et covrir de novele foille . . .  
Li rossignos lores s'efforce  
De chanter et de faire noise ;

<sup>1</sup> 1285-1314.



Lors s'esvertue et lors s'envoise  
 Li papegaus et la kalandre . . .  
 Moult a dur cuer qui en mai n'aime,  
 Quand il ot chanter sus la raime  
 As oisiaus les dous chans piteus." <sup>1</sup>

There is indeed nothing better in the Frenchman's poem than his description of Nature in her lovely and peaceful moods. For the rest, the allegory is long and vague, diffuse and monotonous; it is learned, revealing a considerable knowledge of human nature, and of Ovid in particular amongst those who have analysed humanity; but its design is evidently not clearly conceived, and still less ably executed. Its sketches of character are well drawn; as good, and perhaps even better, than the same characters were subsequently portrayed by Spenser. There is a pungency of satire in Guillaume de Lorris to which the author of the *Faery Queene* could never attain; it was approximately the difference between a cultivated Frenchman of the thirteenth century and a cultivated Englishman of the sixteenth. Nothing could be finer than the touches whereby de Lorris makes Avarice stand out from the canvas.

"Avarice held in her hand a purse, which she was drawing back, and she knotted it so tightly that it took a long time before she could get anything out of it; but she had nothing else to do."

<sup>1</sup> *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Méon, v. 49, *et passim*. We give here Chaucer's translation of the few lines quoted above from the opening of the original poem:—

. . . "In tyme of love and jolite  
 That al thing gynneth waxen gay,  
 For ther is neither busk nor hay  
 In May, that it nyl shrouded bene  
 And it with newe leves wrene . . .  
 Than doth the nyghtyngale hir myght  
 To make noyse, and syngen blythe,  
 Than is blisful many sithe  
 The chelaundre and the papyngay.  
 Than yonge folk entenden ay  
 For to ben gay and amorous,  
 The tyme is than so savorous."

Hypocrisy (*Papclardie*) is no less vividly depicted :—

“She appears a holy creature ; but there is no evil practice under heaven which she does not meditate in her heart. . . . She carries a psalm-book in her hand, and be assured that she puts herself to great trouble to make feigned prayers to God.”

Observe that the art of writing—or at all events the art of writing didactically—was in its infancy in France in the time of Guillaume de Lorris ; the blending of fiction and instruction is not well done, and the design is not, as it would be in the present day, concealed from the eyes of the heedless. In this respect perhaps Guillaume de Lorris is excelled by Jean de Meung ; who, on the other hand, wearies us with his monotonous display of learning, which is as recondite as it is often inapplicable or without force. Cicero, Nero, Crassus, Heraclitus, Suetonius, Diogenes, Claudian, Livy, Sisigambis, Virginius, Boetius, are dragged in, ostensibly to point a moral, either by their lives or by their words ; and few, in all probability, have been the readers who have displayed more patience under Dame Reason's long harangues than the hero of the allegory himself. But this boast of erudition of old Jean Clopinel (the *Lame one*), as his contemporaries christened him, may be pardoned on account of the relish with which he attacked the vices and abuses of his time. If he is below Guillaume de Lorris in poetic elevation and beauty, he is undoubtedly above him in moral courage, and perhaps also in didactic force. Jean de Meung was a scientist, too, in his way ; and there is a gleam of philosophic inspiration in the passages wherein he treats of such subjects as alchemy, astrology, and the operations of nature. One of his best pieces of work is the scene in which he represents nature, busied in the conservation of the material universe. She labours, he tells us, in renewing the type of all that fall victims to death ; whilst art, the feeble imitator of nature, is on his knees, copying her processes, and attempting to counterfeit her works. But he is

ever far behind her, in spite of his cogitations and persistence. Whether he paints, forges, or moulds, whether he fashions fully-equipped knights, quadrupeds, birds, flowers, plants, or fish, graceful dames or handsomely dressed ladies, all this can but produce an imperfect and lifeless image of the works of nature. Guillaume de Lorris attempts no such flights as this. His four thousand verses contain more clear portraiture and exuberant fancy than the eighteen thousand of his continuator ; but he must yield the palm to Jean de Meung, not only in bitter sarcasm and licentious allusion, but also in philosophical reach and in practical effectiveness. The latter part of the poem, in fact, created a more than literary sensation on its first appearance. Jean was a reformer and a democrat ; his work was denounced from the pulpits which he had satirised, and banned in the polite society which his strictures had outraged. Apparently he did not think that zeal for natural morality was worth retaining at the expense of all that was pleasant and comfortable in life, for he retracted in old age the opinions which had gained him so many enemies in his youth.

In this Chaucer resembled him ; and it is by no means the only point in which the English poet resembles Jean de Meung and his fellow-trouvères. The romantic poems of Chaucer, indeed, breathe throughout the spirit of the French *chansons* and *fabliaux*, of which he was manifestly a close and loving student. He must have had a special admiration for the *Roman de la Rose*, which he carried so far as to translate, or rather paraphrase, some seven thousand seven hundred lines. How he has fulfilled his task we may judge in some measure by comparing the version which we have already given.

It would be a long task, and hardly within the scope of our present design, however pleasant it might be to discharge, if we were to institute a full comparison between the romantic writings of Chaucer and of the French trouvères. Every student of the two literatures must have been struck by the

phenomenon of their close resemblance ; a resemblance which extends to both *genres* of French poetry—to the lyrical exquisiteness of the troubadours as well as to the exuberant imagination of northern romance. And indeed there is nothing in this approximation of taste and treatment which can in any manner surprise us, when we consider the intimate relations between the two countries, the identity of language, and at times of individuals, through whose mediation the poetic fervour of the age has been transmitted to posterity. It is useful to dwell upon this approximation of literary taste, as displayed in particular by the authors of the *Roman de la Rose* and by Geoffrey Chaucer, because it forms, in more senses than one, a common starting-point for the poetic development of France and of England. And perhaps we may discover, in the manner and method of Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*, some indication of the contrasted national characteristics, and of the divergences which were thereafter to carry the two literatures so far apart.

Mark how these three men—Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meung, and Geoffrey Chaucer—were severally the creatures of their past, the exponents of their present, the creators of their future. Observe, in the first, how this overflowing force and vigour of lusty life, born of the joyousness of the older trouvères and of his own ardent imagination, was held within certain bounds of propriety by the conditions amidst which he lived. His years were much the same as those of Saint Louis ; his mother had had before her eyes the example of Blanche of Castile—one of those mothers who have done so much to purify and ennoble the world, because, in the face of temptations and trials to which the majority of our race so easily succumb, they have trained from the cradle to the height of the world's ambition a pure and noble son. The innocent boyhood, the studious and conscientious youth, the meek and magnanimous manhood of the flower of French



monarchs, formed a grand type for the imitation of his subjects ; and, if we may judge from his writings, the example had not been lost upon Guillaume de Lorris. His pictures are rarely, if ever, such as would shock the eyes of those for whom he wrote them ; he strove to please the grateful and the refined, not to outrage them, nor yet violently to mould them into another shape. The sap is there, abundant and with difficulty restrained ; but it never breaks through and disfigures the delicate bark of the fair straight tree. Jean de Meung lived in another epoch, and was altogether a different kind of man. Deformed, apparently, in his person, the mind seems to have acquired the body's twist, and to have thirsted instinctively for revenge against those who were not responsible for his misfortune. Moreover, the interval of forty years had done much to alter the complexion of society in France, and that considerably for the worse. Louis had been zealous for religion, he had materially assisted the aggrandisement of the Papacy, and he had kept his subjects continually at his own high level of religious, if somewhat stern and cruel zeal. But, the temporal power of the Popes once established, faith decreased, an almost irresponsible priesthood became a prey to great abuses ; and, on the other hand, the ambitious Philip the Fair set himself to improve upon the work of his sainted predecessor, making the ecclesiastical subservient to the political, and elevating civil duties above religious. He had sufficient influence over the Pope to constrain him to transfer his court from Rome to Avignon ; and, little as he seems to have really cared for literature, he contrived to bend even the poets and philosophers to his will. It is said that Jean de Meung undertook the completion of the *Roman de la Rose* at the instigation of Philip ; and undoubtedly the doctrines inculcated by the second portion of this poem, which extol industry, free and generous living, the begetting of children, as amongst the greatest virtues, are precisely such as would

accord with the far-reaching designs of the monarch. He, moreover, chose his instrument discreetly, for Jean was well calculated to preach this novel gospel of nature, and to impress his generation with a sense of its desirableness. We may indeed be permitted to feel a doubt on the subject of the royal commission in face of the somewhat subversive ideas of civil obligations and of royalty in which the poet indulges ; as witness the following account of the first king amongst men : "A great villain they elected amongst themselves, the most cowardly of all who were there, the stoutest and the greatest, and they made him prince and lord." If a few passages of this remarkable poem may be supposed to have been displeasing to Philip, there was much more which the latter must have found to his liking ; whilst the objurgations of the scandalised churchmen, and the fact that Jean de Meung lived to repudiate many of the notions to which he had given utterance, are quite in consonance with the idea of his having taken a brief from the king. Certain it is that the poet was as natural an outcome of the age of Philip the Fair as Guillaume de Lorris was of the age of Saint Louis ; whereas his reflex influence upon his age was infinitely greater.

Of his two originals, Chaucer decidedly preferred the first, both from the natural bent of his mind, and also because he would readily perceive that Englishmen would not tolerate the licence of Jean de Meung. The contemporaries of the English poet had their licentious tastes, which were gratified to the full in such stories as those of the "Miller of Trumpington" and "Hendy Nicolas." It was a greater licence, too, in its way, coarse, and with less wit, and brutalising. It was the rough licence of the alehouse clown, full of rude loud merriment, and a faithful picture enough of a familiar side of life. But it was not subtle and seductive ; it did not deliberately aim at the loosening of social ties ; it did not deny all truth and faithfulness to woman. It was one thing for Englishmen

to laugh at what actually existed, to make a passing jest of impurity—especially where the brunt of the ridicule fell upon a hypocrite or a double-dealer ; but it was quite another thing to sit down and study the art of corrupting each man his neighbour's wife and daughters, or to set about destroying, in cold blood, the ideal purity of the weaker sex. Chaucer knew his countrymen well, and did not care to give them more than \$629 out of the 17,930 verses of Jean de Meung. He omits the democracy as well as the seductive indecency of his original ; and in both cases he doubtless followed the lead of his personal taste, as well as of his literary judgment. He had been brought up at court, and was by training in harmony with the loyal aristocratic feeling of his day ; and he was, moreover, in all probability, a Lollard, or at least a sympathiser with the Lollards, having married the sister of John of Gaunt's second wife, and being, we may presume, no little influenced by the opinions of that staunch patron of the religious purists. But indeed his genius was cast in a different mould from that of Jean de Meung, who was natural philosopher first, and romancist afterwards. Chaucer, like Guillaume de Lorris, was before all a romancist ; and it is therefore perfectly natural that he should have reproduced the latter's verses with the greatest zest and completeness.

It is difficult to estimate the effect produced on the French national character, and on French literature of later ages, by the shrewd philosophy of Jean de Meung, of whom it has been justly said that his boldness of thought and expression far excels that of Voltaire. His work deserves yet more attention for this reason ; for though he chose to tack it on to the *Roman de la Rose*, perhaps on account of the popularity of the latter, or because the allegorical form precisely suited his purpose, yet his scope and design were more extensive, and in some respects quite distinct from those of Guillaume de Lorris. He worked effectively upon his predecessor's models ;

but his new impersonations were still more striking ; Nature herself, and her priest Genius, are grand conceptions, by whose assistance he is enabled to weave a hundred theories, to expound a thousand ideas, and to multiply suggestions without end.

The earlier poem had left Good Reception in prison, and the lover spares no pains to deliver him. Love espouses his cause, and brings up an army to his assistance, amongst whom are False-Seeming and Abstinence. The former, having found an entrance into the tower, glazes over Evil Speaking, one of the guardians of Good Reception, and, after cutting out his tongue, slays him. The lover now draws near to the accomplishment of his desires, thanks to the assistance of an old duenna ; but Authority, Fear, and Shame, come up in the nick of time and mar the plot. Love then resolves upon an assault, and is assisted in it by his mother Venus. It is at this point, whilst the battle rages, that Nature, distressed at the wholesale destruction of her children, laments her loss to Genius—much indeed as Philip the Fair may have represented the serious diminution of his subjects. Man alone, says Nature, disobeys the law imposed upon him. The stars revolve, the brutes follow their instincts ; man goes forth to war, or dies in idleness, before providing for the reproduction of his species. We cannot here develop the theories and suggestions of our mother Nature, as interpreted for her by Jean de Meung, and by a few of our own contemporaries, under such names as the rehabilitation of humanity, natural selection, and the like. The curious reader may find occasion to see for himself how the French philosopher has handled the subject of which Ovid made an art, and Lucretius a religion.<sup>1</sup>

Guillaume's rough sketch of hypocrisy in Papelardie,

<sup>1</sup> "Toutes (femmes) estes, serés, ou futes  
De faict ou de volonté putes ;  
Et qui bien vous en chercheroit,  
Toutes putes vous trouveroit."



which was destined to be refined into Molière's Tartuffe, just as his Avarice was to become Harpagon, did not satisfy Jean de Meung; and, as has been acutely said,<sup>1</sup> False-Seeming (*Faux-Semblant*) was the symbol, and Tartuffe the type, of what in Papelardie was a simple allegory. De Meung's is a fine creation, and is by no means the mere impersonation of our modern and respectable virtue of hypocrisy. He is rather the worldly-minded, chapel-going, money-making man or woman of the nineteenth century; not so much cloaking his vices under an assumption of virtue, as displaying his deliberate acceptance of conventional false appearances as a thing that will "pay." He is always unmasking out of sheer bravado, and makes no secret of his tastes and preferences. "I dwell," he informs us, "amongst the proud, the impostors, the cunning, who covet worldly honour, and profit by great undertakings, and go in search of grand feasts, and compass the acquaintance of powerful men, and hang on to them, and make out that they are poor, and so live upon fine delicate scraps, and drink costly wines; and go about preaching poverty, and fishing for great wealth." Mr. Harold Skimpole has caught a trick or two of *Faux-Semblant*, as also Mr. Bounderby, and many others who might be named. Not Pecksniff, who is too purely hypocritical to confess as much. It is true that *Faux-Semblant* can don the hood and cowl of Papelardie on occasion, in order the more easily to snare his usual prey—the simple and cowardly among his fellow-creatures; but as a rule he prefers the bounce of professed selfishness. "When I see all these beggarly rascals," he says again, "shivering in these filthy dunghills, snivelling and whining with cold and hunger, I do not meddle with their private concerns." Hypocrisy is his art, not his nature; a weapon which he can take and lay aside rather than a character of which he cannot divest himself.

<sup>1</sup> M. Gérusez, *Histoire de la Littérature française*, vol. i., p. 134.

Would he know the weak points of his fellow-creatures? "For the salvation of souls, I inquire of lords and ladies, and of all their household, concerning their property and their lives." Would he satisfy his curiosity from the fountain-head? "I am wont to reveal to them, without reservation, the secrets of others; and they also tell me everything, concealing nothing whatever." He does not trouble to do this with the poor and uninfluential, but with the rich and powerful; and he finds it pay. "There is no prelate who dare injure or insult my friends, for I have surely closed their mouths." Who does not recognise Faux-Semblant amongst his intimate acquaintances—the "over good-natured" with whom it is fatal even to gossip; from whom you cannot listen to a commonplace tale without thenceforth being at the mercy of their tongue; to know whom is to lay up for yourself a mysterious retribution, coming how and when you know not, but coming surely, as a punishment for having failed in the art of discriminating character. Jean de Meung might be a satirist of the nineteenth century.

## § 2. THE ROYSTERING TROUVÈRES.

We have advanced a little in the engaging company of the continuator of de Lorris, and must return to the reign of Saint Louis in order to exchange a word with Rutebeuf,<sup>1</sup> a roysterer among the roysterers, type and precursor of many a witty-tongued, empty-pocketed Parisian of the present day; in literary tone the forerunner of Villon; in self-railing, poverty-stricken genius, the poetic ancestor of Henri Murger. He sang for his bread, like the poorest of the old trouvères; but he had the salt of wit in greater abundance; and he struck more varied and more resonant strings than they. *Fabliaux*, war-songs, pious legends, personal panegyrics, all came in his way, for all brought him a trifle wherewith to

<sup>1</sup> He died at the end of the thirteenth century.

keep body and soul together ; and it was worth his while keeping body and soul together, if only for the prospect of having one more throw with the dice, and singing, in some quiet corner, one more song that might pass sweetly between his lips. Misery was his bed-fellow, but never his verse-fellow. He could marry on nothing, and produce a family more easily than he could earn bread to keep them with, and yet sing in gaiety of heart : “ Since Mary gave birth to our Saviour in a manger, never was seen such a marriage.” His is a type of a certain French *littérateur* which we shall meet over and over again ; and the prototype of the whole class is perhaps its best example.

France had been almost overdone with singing, and the line was no longer as profitable as it had been. The *trouvère* and his *vielle* had fallen into almost as much disrepute as the Savoyard and his hurdy-gurdy now enjoy in London streets. Philip Augustus had found them—or perhaps we ought to say the *jongleurs* and *charlatans*—so numerous throughout France that he caused many of them to be packed off beyond the frontiers. Their business became unprofitable by dint of too much free-trade. At Bologna they passed a law forbidding them to sing in the public places. Then the more capable amongst them, who were able to write as well as to sing, earned a precarious livelihood by inditing verses in honour of wealthy men, from whom they continued to get at least a little payment in kind, and an occasional turn of board and lodging. Such was the pass to which things had come in Rutebeuf’s time ; which was indeed a blessing in disguise, as may possibly have occurred to him now and then in his weary wanderings. For poetry is the stuff which is wont to show its merits under the test of adversity ; and adversity gave the songs of our genial tramp what they might not otherwise have attained—immortality.

Rutebeuf is a figure on the stage of the thirteenth century.

Sprung, it seems, from the very ruts of the social highway, he came into the world with a tune in his throat as well as in his head, and this gained for him a little schooling amongst the choristers of some church in Champagne. The priests or monks taught him to sing and play ; and having pleased one or other of his masters or hearers, he was afterwards sent to the University of Paris, where he learned, amongst other things, how to gamble and fight. In book-learning he did not advance beyond the rudiments, and he left the university without taking his degree. So far, indeed, the picture might belong to our own day ; but now his career began in earnest ; for his patron seems to have grown tired of him. However, Rutebeuf was a genuine musician ; he could bring music out of every known instrument, and his head was stored with songs and *fabliaux*, old and new. He took to the road forthwith ; and strange companions were some of those whom he encountered there. The highwaymen of the thirteenth century were not Claude Duvals ; and a minstrel to them was as lawful prey as any other—especially if he happened to be leaving a large town, with a moderately well-filled knapsack on his shoulders. There was nothing for it but to stand and deliver if you encountered one of these desperate gangs, for any attempt at resistance or concealment of valuables was pretty sure to be tortured, roasted, or boiled into submission. Rutebeuf was soon tired of vagrancy under these conditions. He settled in the capital, and applied himself more steadily than ever to gratify the political, religious, or artistic tastes of the rich and powerful ; preaching crusades for the king, versifying the lives of saints for the clergy, and immortalising dead nobodies to tickle the vanity of their heirs ; forgetting, for the time, the modesty which had formerly led him to depreciate himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We give Rutebeuf's self-depreciation in order to show how he could play on words, a taste very common in that age —

“ Rudes est et rudement œuvre

Li rudes hons fait rude œuvre . . .

Rudes est, s'a non Rutebeus.”



Rutebeuf did not always place his pen at the service of the monks, whom he really hated, and against whom he was glad to fling an occasional rhyme. During the quarrel between Guillaume de Saint-Amour and Thomas Aquinas, he championed the cause of his university, and put into the students' mouths many a popular song, which earned for him the indirect censure of Pope Alexander IV. For when the latter issued a bull in condemnation of Saint-Amour, he added a word against certain pieces "composed in infamy, and to the discredit of the preaching brothers and inferior clergy, lately published in the common tongue, together with indecent rhymes and songs upon the same subject." Our poet's productions were many and of many kinds; and not a few of those which have been preserved bear witness to the power of his satire, which he was wont to embody in verses bearing the name of *Dits*, or in *fabliaux*.<sup>1</sup> He was, moreover, one of the earliest French comedy-writers, as we shall presently find. And yet, with all this industry and brainwork, which might have placed a prudent man far above the reach of want, he was in a state of periodic poverty and wretchedness; the reason whereof he does not hesitate to inform us, saying that "the dice which the dice-maker has made have cleared me out of my wardrobe, the dice kill me, the dice lay in wait for me and spy me out, the dice attack me and defy me; that weighs me down." Or again, reduced in old age to a late respectability, holding himself up as a warning to others in the following pathetic words;—which, indeed, he might reasonably have withheld, seeing that there were none amongst his hearers with sufficient genius to "be his parallel":—

"My pots are broken and shivered,  
And I have spent all my days . . .  
If ever man has prayed for the dead

<sup>1</sup> Among the *Dits* the *Dit de l'Ozil*, the *Dit des Jacobins*, the one of the *Cordeliers*, and of the *Mensonge*; and among the *fabliaux*, *Le Testament de l'Asne* and *Charlot le Juif* seem to deserve their former reputation.

Let him pray for me . . .  
 I am exhausted if I am moved . . .  
 Know ye how I pass my time?  
 The hope in to-morrow  
 Such are my feasts.  
 One would think I was a priest,  
 For I make more men cross themselves,  
 (It is no sin),  
 Than if I were preaching the gospel.  
 Men cross themselves all over the town  
 At the spectacle I present,  
 Which ought to be told as a story by night,  
 For there is nought like it . . .  
 God has no martyr on his roll  
 Who has suffered as much.  
 If they have been slain for God  
 Burned, stoned, or betrayed,  
 I make no doubt at all  
 That their punishment was soon at an end.  
 But this will endure as long as I live."<sup>1</sup>

The reader will have observed that, if the poetic brilliancy of the age of the trouvères was becoming dim towards the close of the thirteenth century, it was at the same time disappearing with many splendid coruscations of light, destined indeed to flicker low upon the ashes of the altar, but destined also to be fanned anew into a brighter and more consuming

<sup>1</sup> "Mes pos est brisiee et quassez  
 Et j'ai tos mes jors passez . . .  
 S'onques nus hom por mort pria  
 Si pri por moi . . .  
 Je n'en puis nîs si je m'esmoi . . .  
 Saves coment je me demain ?  
 L'espérance de l'endemain  
 Ce sont mes festes.  
 L'en cuide que je soie maîtres ;  
 Quar je fas plus s'ainter de testes  
 (Ce n'est pas guile)  
 Que se je chantasse évangile.

L'on se saine parmi la ville  
 De mes merveilles,  
 On les doit bien conter aux veilles.  
 Il n'y a nules lor pareilles . . .  
 Diex n'a nul martyr en sa route  
 Qui tant ait fait ;  
 S'ils ont esté por Dieu defait,  
 Rosti, lapidé ou detrait,  
 Je ne dout mie  
 Que lor paine fu tost fenie ;  
 Mais ce durra tote ma vie."

flame. Thibaut of Champagne himself was no mere trouvère ; and one might quote many a lyric morsel from him and his contemporaries worthy to be compared with Rutebeuf's best. Gace Brulé and Gautier d'Argies wrote delicately enough at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and possibly owed no little of their grace of style to their acquaintance with the songs of the troubadours. Adam de la Halle, who died perhaps a year or two sooner than Rutebeuf, gives still clearer evidence of southern influence in his refined and easy *cançons*, *rondeaux*, and *partures* or *jeux-partis*. Two stanzas from his well-known *Congé*, in which he bids farewell to Arras, may serve as an example of the bright, nervous simplicity of thought, and the tender grace of expression to which the *langue d'oïl* of the thirteenth century lent itself in the mouths of the elegant and cultivated men of the time :—

“ Arras ! Arras ! town of quarrels  
 And of hatred and of treason,  
 Which was once so noble,  
 Men go about saying that you are being restored ;  
 But if God do not bring back the good (feelings),  
 I see not who is to reconcile you.  
 They love there too much heads or tails (money).  
 Every one deceives in this town  
 As much as he did in the spring that is past.  
 Farewell, more than a hundred thousand times !  
 Now will I go and listen to the gospel,  
 For here they know nought but to lie . . .  
 Fair and very sweet beloved friend,  
 I cannot put on a joyful face,  
 For more in grief from you I part  
 Than from aught else I leave behind.  
 Of my heart be the guardian,  
 And the body shall go elsewhere  
 To learn and seek the means and art  
 Of being more worthy (of thee) . . .

In order to reap a better harvest later,  
For three or four years  
We let our land lie fallow."<sup>1</sup>

### § 3. TROUVÈRES OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

The lyrical trouvères of the fourteenth century might lay claim to a chapter on their own account, if only because they represent almost the sole surviving poetic spirit of France in an age of comparative literary sterility, when there was little besides them of freshness, beauty, or originality. Our limits, however, will not permit us to go at leisure over the ground occupied by Eustache Deschamps, himself a most prolific trouvère.<sup>2</sup> His friend Guillaume de Machault,<sup>3</sup> musician and poet, and the chronicler Froissart<sup>4</sup> himself, were his rivals in lyrical proficiency and prolixity. And the new or newly perfected styles were well suited to the not very sustained efforts of these poets. The ballad most in favour with the age consisted of two or more stanzas rhymed on an identical model, all ending with the same line. The *rondeau*, in its earlier shape, had eight lines, the first, fourth, and seventh being identical, as were the second and last. The *virolai* turned on two rhymes, of which the first had

<sup>1</sup> "Arras ! Arras ! ville de plait  
Et de haine et de detrait,  
Qui soliez être si nobile,  
On va disant c'on vous refait ;  
Mais se Diex le bien n'i ratrait,  
Je ne voi qui vous reconcile.  
On i aime trop crois et pile ;  
Chascuns fuberte en ceste vile,  
Au point c'on estoit a le mait.  
Adieu de fois plus de cent mile !  
Aillours vois oïr l'Evangile,  
Car chi fors mentir on ne sait . . .

Bèle très douce amie chiere,  
Je ne puis faire bele chiere ;  
Car plus dolans de vous me part  
Que de rien que je laisse arrière.  
De mon cuer serés trésorière,  
Et li cors ira d'autre part  
Aprendre et querre engien et art  
De miex valoir . . .  
Pour miex fructefier plus tart,  
De si au tiers an ou au quart  
Laist on bien se terre en jachiere."

<sup>2</sup> He was born in 1320 and died at the beginning of the fifteenth century ; he was the author of the *Arte de Dicter et Ecrire Chanzons, Balades, Virelais et Rondeaux*, published in 1392.

<sup>3</sup> 1290-1377.

<sup>4</sup> 1337-1410.



to predominate throughout the whole ; the first verses were repeated together or separately, as often as necessary ; hence the name.

The following is an excellent *rondeau* of de Machault's, which rings already with the mellow tone more perfectly attained a century or two later :—

“ As white as a lily, more ruddy than the rose,  
Brilliant as an oriental ruby ;  
In beholding your beauty without an equal,  
As white as a lily, more ruddy than the rose,  
I am so delighted that my heart always watches,  
So that it may serve as a law for a true lover ;  
As white as a lily, more ruddy than the rose,  
Brilliant as an oriental ruby.”<sup>1</sup>

Deschamps will not be dismissed without another word, and his satirical vein, if nothing else, deserves it. Witness this letter to his father :—

“ My dear father—I have not a penny, nor can I have unless you send it to me. Study is very costly. I cannot use my Code nor my Digest, because they are dropping to pieces. I owe the provost two crowns, and no one will lend me the money. The fact is, that if I am to continue my studies, you must send me money to buy books, to pay my fees, and to keep myself. I want decent dress, too ; and if you do not want your son to appear a mere clown, you will send me money for that too. Wine is dear, lodgings are dear, everything is dear. I am in debt all round. I fully expect to be excommunicated, and I have already been summoned. If you do not send me money, I shall be most certainly turned out at Easter.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Blanche com lys, plus que rose vermeille,  
Resplendissant com rubis d'Orient,  
En remirant vo biauté non pareille,  
Blanche com lys, plus que rose vermeille,  
Suy si ravis que mes cuers toudis veille  
Afin que serve à loy de fin amant,  
Blanche com lys, plus que rose vermeille,  
Resplendissant com rubis d' Orient.”

<sup>2</sup> Besant, *The French Humourists*, p. 82.

How nearly was the fourteenth century a counterpart of the nineteenth; except perhaps that the fourteenth was able to paint its pictures with fewer touches! Less like a counterpart is the scene in which Deschamps, then fifty-five years old, relates how he was admitted to an interview with Agnes of Navarre in her garden; on which occasion he had the prudence to take his secretary with him. The artless girl laid her head in the poet's lap and fell asleep. Whereupon the secretary placed a leaf upon her lips, and motioned to Deschamps to kiss the leaf. He did so; or rather he would have done so; but the secretary withdrew the leaf at the moment of impact, and the young princess awoke. "She said to me quite softly," continues the poet, "'My friend, you are very insulting; know you no other sport than that?'" But the fair one broke into a smile with her lovely mouth; which gave me to imagine, and at all events to hope, that the thing did not displease her." Agnes married Gaston de Foix, and her history is sad enough to make us wish that it had stopped short at this point.

Meanwhile, behind and distinct from all these poetic outbursts of the national genius—except that mutual action and reaction maintained their never-ceasing laws, and that the history of literature and of civilisation reflects from one to the other the common light of human and national development—the State and the Church were gradually perfecting their organisation. Philip Augustus, Saint Louis, Philip the Fair, contributed each his share towards cementing and consolidating the inheritance of the Carlovingians and the Capets. The power of the monarchs had increased, the power of the barons had been restricted. The people lost almost as much as they gained by the subjection of the aristocracy; but the *communes* and municipalities little by little increased their quota of freedom. The royal prerogative was pushed far by Louis IX., and farther still, to the very verge of weakness, by

Philip the Fair ; whilst the tendency of the third estate of the realm towards the democratic idea manifested itself even side by side with the decreasing influence of the *communes*. The Church, as we have already seen, raised to high authority and even civil dignity by Louis, had been shorn of much of its power under his high-handed grandson, but gradually regained it in the reigns of Philip's weaker successors, and during the hundred years' war between France and England. In the fourteenth century, French ecclesiastics bore themselves bravely before the civil power, and in the face of a spiritless and obedient people. The events which were so fatal to the unhappy House of Valois strengthened the hands of the Church ; and the anarchy of France created for her an opportunity which she was not altogether incapable of seizing.

## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. PROSE-WRITERS OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

IN the infancy of every literature, which is also the infancy of a language, men of ardent imagination, who write what the most unlearned can readily understand, and who naturally seek a wide and popular audience, make use of the popular form of speech; whereas scholars who write for scholars, and neither expect nor seek a wide audience for their historic narratives and theological discussions, are wont to use the ancient tongue, which circumstances have contributed to make the classical, learned, or sacred form of speech. So it was between the Sanscrit and the younger Indian languages, between the Chaldean and younger Semitic languages, and, in Europe, between the Latin on the one hand and the neo-Latin and Teutonic languages on the other. It is not in itself a sufficient reason for, but it contributes to explain, the fact that the poetic literature of the French language preceded its prose literature by several centuries; whereas we have seen that the early prose-writers of Gaul who used the Latin language were both more numerous and more skilful than the Gallo-Roman poets of the earlier Christian centuries.

We must not overlook the fact that the vulgar tongue, the neo-Latin tongue, which was called *lingua romana*, to distinguish it both from pure Latin and from Teutonic, but which was not commonly known as French until the ninth century, had been from the fifth or sixth century the language of the



great majority of Frenchmen; that councils of French bishops, early in the ninth century, had ordered the Fathers to be translated into *lingua romana* for the use of "the people;"<sup>1</sup> that the same injunction was many times repeated during that and the two following centuries; by which time the Romance form of speech was the language of the Court and State in England,<sup>2</sup> in Spain, in Italy, and in Greece. Up to the fourteenth century, however, this popular form of speech, so far as prose is concerned, was rather a spoken than a written tongue; although it may be taken for granted that any language in common use, which was daily and familiarly spoken, must also occasionally have been written in prose. It is true that a large portion of the poetry of the trouvères would be, in the first instance, transmitted from memory to memory without the intervention of written documents, whereas the same method could not so easily be applied to prose; whilst the ready writers who were not poets would be mere copyists, or, if themselves producers, would, as a rule, be priests, monks, or professors in the universities and schools, and would consequently use Latin. Nevertheless, prose Romance documents, in addition to those above named, are to be met with from the eleventh century onwards. Godfrey of Bouillon caused the *Assises du Royaume de Jérusalem* to be written in French, and Thomas de Couci gives us in the same language the well-known law of Vervins. To Picardy the Abbé Lebeuf<sup>3</sup> attributes certain Romance translations of the *Book of Job*, the two *Books of the Kings*, and the *Dialogues of Saint Gregory*; whereas in England we have prose Romance

<sup>1</sup> The Council of Tours, 813, "after having enjoined upon the bishops the use of the Patristic writings as being most indispensable to instruct the people committed to their charge in the principles of religion, required that each of them should translate or have them translated into the Romance or the Teutsch dialect, that all might the more readily listen to the truth which should be imparted to them."

<sup>2</sup> Under Edward the Confessor, 1043, and more completely after the Conquest.

<sup>3</sup> 1687-1760.

works from the pens of several of Henry Beauclerk's assistants, such as Wace, Walter Map, and Fantosme.

It was in the thirteenth century that Frenchmen began to write their history in their own tongue, and laid the foundations of what has since proved to be one of the characteristic excellences of French literature. Nursed by the grand epics in which their fathers and grandfathers had sung the glories of ancient and modern prowess, the noble adventures of chivalry, and the mighty exploits of kings, they began to record in serious earnest the events in which they had themselves borne part, and which they felt ought not to be lost upon their children. For the most part, doubtless, it was the men who thought themselves unequal to the task of writing a worthily-sustained poem to whom the idea first occurred of setting forth a matter-of-fact narrative in prose. Froissart, it is true, had an ardent poetic genius, but it was exclusively in the lyric vein, and he would have shrunk from the idea of composing his chronicles in verse. Naturally enough the historic narratives which claim our attention were, to begin with, simple and unambitious records, candid and even colloquial in style, and much in the manner of a protracted letter to a friend. When we think of the difficulties of this new departure, and the steadfast efforts necessary to overcome them, we have reason to be surprised at the readiness with which success was achieved. The special historic genius of the nation was manifested by Villehardouin, Joinville, and Froissart. In England the step from poetry to history was not so easily made; English literature had many prose-writers before it acquired one respectable historian.

These were not, indeed, the earliest French historians even of the Middle Ages, for the cloister had already performed its part. But the monastic chroniclers would not or could not depart from their consecrated Latin, which, though it had its facilities, had also its restraints. And the monks, moreover,

wrote chiefly of events which they had never seen, sometimes of events which had never happened.<sup>1</sup> They wrote, again, with a predisposition to rely upon accepted traditions, and for readers whom they expected to take the truth of their narratives for granted. They were, in fact, monastic first and Frenchmen afterwards, and the breath of French historic genius barely deigned to assist them; whereas the truer historians whom we are about to study narrated the events of their own experience. Their scope was limited, and within that scope they were masters of their own powers; they undertook no more than they could firmly grasp, and what they undertook they felt themselves able to accomplish. In this they were but unwittingly adopting the plan which the Frenchman of to-day follows of set purpose. His circle must be drawn sharply, and his radius fixed; that done, his talent enables him to subdivide his ground, and to fill in his details with ease. The earlier historian had to do rather with a straight line than with a circle, but even there he was careful to mark his boundaries. The monks, on the other hand, neither realised nor cared to acknowledge the necessity of any limits to their talent; so that, although their chronicles serve a useful purpose, and although certain shorter and more personal narratives are valuable as historical memoirs, we possess no monastic history of the first rank. Gregory of Tours, Eginhard, the so-called Turpin, and Hincmar, have supplied many a fact which would otherwise have been lost to us; but their records are far from trustworthy. The patriotic labours of the Benedictines of the Abbey of Saint Denis, which have bequeathed to posterity an invaluable collection of historic documents, did much to redeem the cloister from the reproach which rests upon it; and Suger<sup>2</sup> himself, to whom the grand idea was

<sup>1</sup> The monastic chroniclers usually begin with the creation of the world, and work their way through much imperfect compilation before they arrive at their own times.

<sup>2</sup> A man of the people (1082-1152), who became Chancellor of St. Denis and the shrewd counsellor of Louis VI. and Louis VII.

probably due, came nearest of all his order to the possession of the genuine historic gift. He wrote the annals of at least one of the reigns in which he occupied so prominent a position, but his narrative exhibits the dimness of perception which was fatal to all the monastic writers. After him came several other historians,<sup>1</sup> and, last of the Latin chroniclers, the anonymous author of the reign of Charles VI.<sup>2</sup> Rarely have these monastic records been translated, and still more rarely read, in their original form. Nevertheless, we must not quit the subject without rendering justice to the same Abbey of St. Denis, which gave the French in their own tongue a collection of the *Chroniques de France*.

The first French historian whose work was originally written in the common form of speech is also—and the fact must be emphasised as one of special significance—the first noteworthy writer of French prose. This was Geoffroy de Villehardouin, a soldier and diplomatist, who was born about the middle of the twelfth century, and who died in the year 1213. In 1199 he was sent by Thibault III. of Champagne to treat with the Republic of Venice for the passage of the troops of the fourth crusade through their country. He was himself a soldier of the Cross, and was present at the taking of Constantinople. These events he describes in his *Histoire de la Conquête de Constantinople*—the work of a soldier, simple if somewhat stiff in manner, bearing every mark of fidelity to fact, but not wanting in ambitious passages and in complacent efforts after rhetoric. Villehardouin probably thought he was writing a poem, and would, in any case, have held that the events recorded by him deserved a poetic dress as much as the subjects of the grandest *Chansons de Geste*. And yet he had the true feeling of the historian, giving us with great

<sup>1</sup> Rigord, Guillaume le Breton, the anonymous writer of the lives of Saint Louis and Louis the Bald, and Guillaume de Nangis, who brought his chronicle down to the year 1340.

<sup>2</sup> 1368-1422.



minuteness the enumeration of the hosts, the plans and deliberations of the chiefs, the position of the opposing armies, the varying fortunes of the struggle ; whilst he forgets neither the causes nor the issues of the war, so far as he was able to discern them. He is the Xenophon of his own history, having himself been an actor in all which he narrates ; a fact which adds a special freshness and vigour to his account. He was, as a consequence, more than the Mandeville of French prose, for his subject was more purely historical, and he had the art of laying down the model and practice of historic narrative. He had precisely that dignity which Froissart needed, though it was left to Froissart to excel him in graphic and picturesque description.

The nervous readiness with which our valiant soldier recounts the scenes he had passed through, makes his work interesting and readable down to the present day ; for one is carried along by natural sympathy with all his dangers, fears, and successes. The pilgrim army is before us as we read ; or rather it is beside us and behind us, whilst we smite down the paynim in the front of the battle. At every turn we hear the voice of the Christian warrior by our side. "Now hear one of the grandest marvels, one of the greatest adventures that you ever heard ! . . . Now may you hear of great prowess ! . . . Know that there was none so bold but his heart trembled ! . . . Know that never was any town so proudly taken ! . . . Know that God did never deliver any people from greater perils than he did the host on that day !" He is always bringing himself as witness to the truth of what he says ; and so great is the respect with which he inspires us that we readily accept the sufficiency of the confirmation. "So great was the booty made," he says, speaking of the capture of the city, "that none of you could tell the end of the gold and silver, and of the vessels and precious stones, and of samite, and of silken stuff, and of miniver and grey and ermine robes, and

all the valuable possessions which were ever found in the world. And Geoffroi de Villehardouin, the marshal of Champagne, solemnly bears witness to his knowledge of the truth, that, since the present age was in existence, never was so much gained in one town."

Villehardouin had, of course, the advantage of being perhaps first in the field of French historians, with none of the modes and mannerisms of predecessors which modern writers often find so troublesome. If he tells us anything of himself, or if he gives an opinion about the plans and actions of his fellow-leaders, or if he wishes to qualify or to confirm a statement, he does not wait to bring it in by way of digression, or add it in a note, or refer us to an appendix ; but out comes his idea at the moment when it occurs to him, and, strange to say, it does not confuse the narrative, but manifestly assists and illumines it. "Many kept badly their promises," he says in one place, pausing in the description of a chain of circumstances to remark upon what subsequently happened, "and many were blamed for it." And again in a critical mood he says, "Know that such a one could do a great deal better."

His *History* is a trustworthy and lively picture of the times, and of the valorous barons and their retainers in particular, a few pages whereof tell us far more than a chapter of considerations drawn from the whole field of contemporary external history. It is a candid confession from the mouth of one of those famous knights of the Middle Ages, who would follow their chosen banner into the field, but would fight there as if each individual were the sole hope and stay of his cause. Discipline there might be amongst the inferior ranks ; but amongst the superior little indeed, except the discipline of a common purpose, and of an ever-present religious obligation. Yet the latter was strong enough to assure a victory over hosts well calculated to inspire awe. The Christians had the ever-pre-

sent belief that their true leader was the God who had sent them forth to fight, and who was directing the battle from on high. The following passage expresses clearly enough the spirit which led the crusaders to victory :—

“The Emperor Morchufles had come to lodge, before the assault, in a place with all his army, and with all his red tents put up. Thus the affair lasted until Monday morning ; and then were armed those vessels and transports and galleys. And those of the town feared them more than they did at first ; they were so astounded, that upon the walls and upon the towers appeared nothing but men. And then began the ferocious and marvellous assault. And each vessel attacked straight before it. The cry of the noise was so great, that it seemed that the earth was going to be destroyed. Then the assault lasted long, so that our Lord for them raised a wind, which is called Boire, and brought the vessels and the transports more on the shore than they were before. And two ships which were tied together, of which one was called the Pilgrim and the other Paradise, approached so near the tower, the one on one side, the other on the other, as God and the wind led them, that the ladder of the Pilgrim was right against the tower, and now a Venetian and a French knight, who was named André d’Urboise, entered the tower.”<sup>1</sup>

Eleven years after the death of Villehardouin was born another master of the art of prose, Jean de Joinville, of whom we shall presently have occasion to speak. But the annals

<sup>1</sup> “L’Empereres Morchufles s’ere venuz herbergier devant l’assaut en une place à tot son pooir, et ot tendues ses vermeilles tentes. Ensi dura cil affaires trosque lundi matin ; e lors furent armé cil des nés et des vissiers et cil des galies. Et cil de la ville les doterent mains que il ne firent à premiers ; si furent si esbandi que sor les murs et sor les tors ne paroiert se genz non. Et lors commença li assaus fiers et merveillex. Et chascuns vaissiaux assailloit endroit lui. Li huz de la noise fu si granz que il sembla que terre fondist. Ensi dura li assaus longement, tant que nostre Sires lor fit lever un vent, qu’on appelle Boire, et bota les nés et les vaissiaux sor la rive plus qu’ils n’estoient devant. Et deux nés qui estoient liées ensemble dont l’une avoit nom la Pelerine et l’autre li Paravis, aprochièrent tant à la tor, l’une d’une part, et l’autre d’autre si com Diex et li venz li mena, que l’eschiele de la Pelerine se joinst à la tor, et maintenant uns Véniciens et uns chevaliers de France qui avoit nom André d’Urboise entrèrent en la tor.”

of the thirteenth century preserve the names of several other writers of French prose, to whom we may conveniently turn our attention in the meantime. Amongst the labours of the Abbey of Saint Denis, one of the most serviceable was the translation of the old Latin chronicles, a work undertaken by the monk Primat, at the suggestion of Matthieu de Vendôme, in the year 1274. The originals turned to account by Primat were very numerous;<sup>1</sup> the translation was clearly and judiciously effected, and it has been largely drawn upon in every succeeding age for the materials of the early history of France. In the mere matter of style, it was not to be expected that Primat should display the same qualities which had distinguished Villehardouin; nor indeed was it possible to aim at so high a model in what did not profess to be much more than a translation. But the language of these *Chroniques* is marked by precision and elegance of no mean order, as the following passage, which is the very beginning, will testify.

“Because several people doubted the genealogy of the kings of France, from what origin, from what family they have sprung, he (Privat) undertook to do this work, by the command of such a man whom he could not, nor ought, to refuse. . . . And this history shall be written according to the letter and arrangement of the chronicles of the Abbey of Saint Denis, where the history and the actions of all the kings are written. . . . For thence the origin of history must be drawn. And if he can find in the chronicles of other churches something which may be wanting in the work, he may add to it, according to the pure truth of the letter, without omitting anything, unless it produces confusion. . . . And in order that he should not be considered a liar, he begs all those who shall read this history to look in the *Chronicles* of Saint Denis; there they will be able to find out by the letter if he has told the truth or a falsehood.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> They include the *Chronicle* of Aimoin, *Gesta Dagoberti*, *Gesta Regum*, the *chronicle* of Siegbert, Eginhard, Saint Bertin, Guillaume de Jumièges, Hugues de Fleuri, the works of Suger, and many others.

<sup>2</sup> “Pour ce que plusieurs gens doutoient de la généalogie des roys de



An historical fragment by Nicholas de Senlis, commencing with the Trojan war, and coming rapidly down as far as the Merovingian period, the date whereof may be assigned to the first or second decade of the thirteenth century, shows that the cultivation of a prose style extended to a dialect which is neither Southern nor Northern. The writer winds up his labours with a remark which explains from one point of view the gradual abandonment of poetry as the medium of historic narrative. "Here ends the history. May God give life to the Count of Saint Pol, who caused it to be turned from Latin into Romance, without rhyme for better understanding, so that many a one may learn it." The reason is a natural one; and the like cause will account for the unrhyming of many of the old romances which took place during the same century.<sup>1</sup>

The work of Estienne Boilesve or Boileau, whose life covered the first seventy years of the thirteenth century, and who was *prévôt* of Paris under Louis IX., derives its chief value from the fact of its making us acquainted with the police regulations of the capital in his day, with the rules of the ancient trade corporations, and the nature and amount of the taxes levied upon the city for the benefit of the king. It is addressed "to all the citizens and all the residents in Paris, and to all those who may come within the boundaries of that same place," and it opens with a quaint remonstrance against

France, de quel original, de quel lignie ils sont descendus, emprist-il ceste œuvre à faire, par le commandement de tel homme qu'il ne put, ne dut refuser. . . . Et sera ceste histoire descrite selon la lettre et l'ordonnance des chroniques de l'abbaye de Saint-Denis, où les histoires et les fais de tous les roys sont escripts. . . . Car là doit-on puiser l'original de l'histoire. Et s'il peut trouver es croniques d'autres églises chose qui vaille à la besoigne, il i pourra bien adjoûter, selon la pure vérité de la lettre, sans riens oster se ce n'est chose qui face confusion. . . . Et pour ce que on ne le tiegne à mencongier, il prie à tous ciaux que ceste histoire liront que ils regardent ans croniques de Saint-Denis; là porra on esprover par la lettre s'il dist voir on menconge." I suspect that this extract has been partly modernised.

<sup>1</sup> Baudoin Butors applied himself industriously to paraphrasing in prose the heroic poems of his predecessors.

the indiscriminate trade of certain merchants, "because they had sold as foreign certain things belonging to their trade which were not so good nor so valuable as they ought to have been." A strange echo from other days, which proves that Paris had already begun, at least in one respect, to earn the character which was thereafter to distinguish her.

A contemporary of Boilesve's, who died in the same year, was a lawyer of no mean repute, Pierre de Fontaines; to whom Saint Louis, perplexed by any complicated questions of justice, was wont to apply for assistance, saying, "Judge this case." He has left behind him a treatise on the Roman law, as it had been accepted and interpreted in France. His language is rude and difficult, or must at least have appeared so, even at that time, to the Parisians. It is, in fact, the Picard dialect, but even more archaic.<sup>1</sup>

Another jurisconsult was Philippe de Remi, lord of Beaumanoir,<sup>2</sup> who left behind him a reputation as the French Justinian, so able and so profound, that, until the time of Montesquieu, France produced none who can be compared to him. He was a zealous champion of the royal prerogative, and at the same time a firm maintainer of the common law of France, and of the ancient liberties of the people, which had been somewhat overborne by the feudal supremacy of the aristocracy. It was in this spirit that he compiled his book *des Coutumes et Usages de Beauvoisis*. Clermont was his native county; but the customs and usages which he reasserted with all the convincing arguments of a skilful lawyer, and with much of the eloquence of a rhetorician, applied almost equally well to the whole of France. The method and manner of his work, as well as the style of his prose as it was written by cultivated Frenchmen at the end of

<sup>1</sup> "Tu qui te veus doutriner de droit, et de terre tenir, si te lô ke tu aies en toi quatre choses princhipaux: cremeur de Dieu, contenir soi, custiement de tes seigns, amour à deffendre tes sougis."

<sup>2</sup> He died in 1296.

the thirteenth century, are certainly very deserving.<sup>1</sup> Beaumanoir was also a poet, and several of his pieces, of no great literary merit, are extant.<sup>2</sup>

The list of the prose writers of the thirteenth century is by no means exhausted ; and it might easily be extended to proportions too great for our present purpose. Lorens, a preaching friar, who wrote the *Somme des Vices et des Vertus*,<sup>3</sup> better known under the short title of *Somme le Roi*, from the fact of its having been suggested by Philip III. ; Agnès d'Harcourt, abbess of Longchamps, who wrote the life of Isabella, sister of Saint Louis ; Marguerite de Duyn, prioress of Pölet, the authoress of a book of meditations ; the anonymous author of a touching account of the last moments of Jeanne, Countess of Alençon,<sup>4</sup> are amongst the writers who in this century set their mark upon the earlier prose literature of France.

## § 2. PROSE-WRITERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

One other great figure arrests our notice in the group of noble and intellectual men whereof Saint Louis is the centre ; the figure of a man who had fought by the good king's side, and sat at his feet, who served him faithfully in life and perhaps still better in death ; for Jean, Sire de Joinville,<sup>5</sup> not only wrote the *Memoirs* of his royal master, but by that means assisted to secure his canonisation. The nature, style,

<sup>1</sup> "Il nous est avis que cheli qui veut estre loyaux baillis et droituriers doit avoir en soy dix vertus, en laquele l'une si est qui doit estre dame et maîtresse de toutes les autres, ne sans lui, ne pueent estre les autres vertus gouvernées, et ciele vertu si est appellée sapience ; car autretant vaut estre sapiens comme sage."

<sup>2</sup> They are two long tales in verse, *La Manekine* (the Woman without Hands) and *Jehan et Blonde* (of Oxford), a Beauvaisian epic, interspersed with criticism on English manners and language ; *Li saluz d'amours*, *La Complainte d'amours*, a tale of *Fole l'arguece*, and several other songs.

<sup>3</sup> Written in 1279.

<sup>4</sup> She died in 1292.

<sup>5</sup> 1223-1317.

and value of his work may be exemplified by its dedication and design.<sup>1</sup>

1. "To his good lord Louis (X.), son of the king of France, by the grace of God King of Navarre, Count Palatine of Champagne and Brie, Jehan, Sire de Joinville, his seneschal of Champagne, health, and love, and honour, and his service at command.

2. "Beloved Sire, I give you to know that madam the queen, your mother, who loved me much (to whom God grant his good mercy !) desired me as urgently as she could that I would cause to be made for her a book of the holy words and the good deeds of our king the holy Louis ; and I promised it to her, and with the aid of God the book is finished in two parts. The first part relates how he governed all his time in accord with God and the Church, and to the advantage of his reign. The second part of the book speaks of his great knightly deeds and of his great feats of arms.

3. "Sire, because it is written, 'Do first that which pertains to God, and he will see to all thy other needs,' I have, in the first place, caused to be written that which pertains to the three things mentioned above ; namely that which pertains to the profit of souls and of bodies, and that which pertains to the government of the people.

<sup>1</sup> We give the first three paragraphs in the original.

1. "A son bon Signour Loos, fil dou roy de France, par la grace de Dieu roy de Navarre, de Champaigne et de Brie conte palazin, Jehans, sires de Joinville, ses seneschaus de Champaigne, salut et amour et honneur, et son service appareillié.

2. "Chiers sire, je vous faiz à savoir que Mme. La Roine vostre mere, qui mout m'aimoit (a cui Diex bone merci face !) me pria si à certes comme elle pot, que je li feisse faire un livre des saintes paroles et des bons faiz nostre roy saint Loos ; et je le li oi en couvenant, et à l'aide de Dieu li livres est assouvis en deux parties. La premiere partie si devise comment il se gouverna tout son tens selonc Dieu et selonc l'Eglise, et au profit de son regne. La seconde partie dou livre si parle de ses granz chevaleries et de ses granz faiz d'armes.

3. "Sires, pour ce qu'il est escrit : 'fai premier ce qui aiert à Dieu, et il te adreçera toutes tes autres besoignes,' ai-je tout premier fait escrire ce qui aiert aus trois choses desus dites ; c'est à savoir ce qui aiert au profit des ames et des cors, et ce qui aiert au gouvernement dou peuple."



4. "And those other things have I caused to be written also to the honour of the truly holy body ; in order that by these things mentioned below one may see quite clearly that never a lay man of our time lived so holily all his time, from the beginning of his reign to the end of his life. I was not myself at the end of his life ; but the Count Pierre d'Alençon, his son, was there (who loved me much), who related to me the fine end which he made, which you will find written in the end of this book.

5. "And it seems to me that they did by no means enough for him when they did not place him in the number of the martyrs, for the great torments which he suffered in the pilgrimage of the cross, during the space of six years that I was in his company, and for this likewise, that he followed our Lord in the matter of the cross. For if God died on the cross, so did he ; for crusader was he when he died at Tunis.

6. "The second book will speak to you of his great knightly deeds and of his great acts of daring, which is such that I saw him four times place his body in risk of death, as you shall hear later on, to avert the loss of his people."

The translation is bare, and word for word, and hardly does justice to the simplicity and freshness of the original. The style of Joinville possesses in advance all the clearness and precision which were to become the chief characteristics of French prose—which were, indeed, legacies of the Latin prose upon which it was founded. If Joinville appears, by his writings, less sustained and dignified than his predecessor Villehardouin, less concise and supple in expression, he is at all events more reflective, more thoughtful, more redundant in idea and language, and more rich in vocabulary. The two have many virtues of manner and form in common ; and if each is to be credited with particular and distinctive marks, they have yet deservedly come down to posterity bracketed together as the two first masters of the French historic style.

Joinville and Villehardouin had, in fact, much in com

mon, not only in their writings but in the circumstances of their lives. Both were favoured servants and companions of Saint Louis ; both followed him as pilgrims of the cross—the latter to Constantinople, the former in the second and abortive crusade which terminated by the king's death. Both had fought by his side, and both came home to write of his prowess and his goodness. The parallel extends still farther back, for both were born in Champagne, and held honourable office there. As regards their writings, the resemblance might have been still more marked if their subjects had been more nearly identical ; but whilst Villehardouin's work is a narrative of events pure and simple, Joinville's consists of a personal memoir, and deals not only with events, but with words and opinions. Yet what we have said concerning the special French characteristics which found their scope in and impressed their seal upon the plastic language of the older historian, is no less true of the younger one. The historic genius of France embraces her talent for the composition of personal memoirs ; the qualities which induce success in the one variety are the cause of success in the other. If anything, perhaps a French writer has greater reason to apply himself with confidence to the writing of a memoir than of a period of history. His subject is more strictly limited, he is better able to grasp his materials, and to throw himself into the conditions and circumstances which he undertakes to describe. The biographer can make himself one with the man he has set himself to study—can think his thoughts, experience his feelings, and even rehearse his acts. The historian can but partially and imperfectly follow a like course with an epoch of history, however narrow the group of circumstances comprised in it. He can indeed give us, actually or virtually, the biography of each of the figures who march across his stage ; and if he be a genuine historian, this is precisely what he will do, bringing together and harmonising the men

whose actions created the history which he has to write. But when all is done, his work cannot have the concision, the tone, the completeness of a single memoir.<sup>1</sup>

In Joinville, of course, as in Villehardouin, we find such virtues as these in a rudimentary form ; but they are there. A few touches suffice to bring the sainted king before us, with something of the actual vividness of reality, if not with the absolute distinctness which existed in the author's mind. Let us take a couple of paragraphs, almost at random, from the earlier part of the work.<sup>2</sup>

22. "He (St. Louis) was so sober of mouth that I never heard him, any day of my life, order any viands as do many rich men ; and so he ate patiently that which his cooks prepared and placed before him. In his words he was moderate ; for no day of my life did I hear him speak ill of any man, nor ever heard him name the devil, which name is far spread through the kingdom : the which I think by no means pleases God."

26. "He called me one time and said to me : 'I dare not

<sup>1</sup> Even the late M. Michelet seems no exception to this.

<sup>2</sup> 22. "De la bouche fu il si sobres que onques jour de ma vie je ne li oy devisier nulles viandes, aussi comme maint riche home font ; ainçois manjoit pacientment ce que ses queus li appareilloit et mettoit on devant li. En ses paroles fu il attrempez ; car onques jour de ma vie je ne li oy mal dire de nullui, ne onques ne li oy nommer le dyable, liquex nons est bien expandus par le royaume : ce que je croy qui ne plaît mie à Dieu."

26. "Il m'apela une foiz et me dist : 'Je n'os parler à vous pour le soutil senz dont vous estes, de chose qui touche a Dieu ; et pour ce ai-je apelie ces dous frères qui ci sont, que je vous vueil faire une demande.' La demande fu teix : 'Seneschaus, fist-il, quex chose est Diex ?' Et je li diz : 'Sire, ce est si bone chose que mieudre ne puet estre.'—'Vraiment,' fist-il, 'c'est bien respondu ; que ceste response que vous avez faite, est escripte en c'est livre que je tieing en ma main.'

27. "'Or vous de-mant je,' fist-il, 'lequel vous ameriés miex, ou que vous fussiés mesiaus, ou que vous eussiés fait un pechié mortel ?' Et je onques ne li menti, li respondi que je en ameroie miex avoir fait trente que estre mesiaus. Et quant li frère s'en furent parti, il m'apela tout seul, et me fist seoir a ses piez et me dist : 'Comment me deistes-vous hier ce ?' Et je li diz que encore le disoie-je ? Et il me dist : 'Vous deistes comme hastis musarz ; car vous devez savoir que nulle si laide mezelerie n'est comme d'estre en pechié au dyable : par quoy nulle si laide meselerie ne puet estre.'

“speak to you for the subtle sense which you have in that which touches on God; and for this have I called these two monks who are here, because I wish to put a question to you.” The question was this: ‘Seneschal,’ said he, ‘what thing is God?’ And I said to him: ‘Sire, it is so good a thing that better cannot be.’ ‘Verily,’ said he, ‘it is well answered; for this reply which you have made is written in this book which I hold in my hand.’

27. “‘Now I ask you,’ said he, ‘which would you like best, that you should be leprous, or that you had committed a mortal sin?’ And I never lied to him; I answered ‘that I should like better to have committed thirty (mortal sins) than to be leprous.’ And when the monks were gone, he called me alone, and made me sit at his feet, and said: ‘What did you say to me yesterday?’ And I said to him that I should still say it. And he said to me: ‘You spoke as a blundering fool; for you ought to know that there is no so repulsive leprosy as being in sin with the devil.’”

King, seneschal, and monks are before us as we read; for no poet which France had yet produced knew more cunningly how to wield the limner’s brush than the earliest memoir-writer of France with his simple periods.

To Villehardouin and Joinville in the thirteenth century succeeded Froissart and Commines in the fourteenth—chroniclers worthy to tread in the steps of the fathers of French history, prose-writers who carried on the traditions of their masters to the verge of the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> Jean Froissart, a native of Valenciennes in Hainault, became canon and treasurer of the collegiate church of Chimay in Normandy. He was a poet as well as a chronicler, but his poetic genius was lyrical, and for his history he found no medium so much under his command as the simple, nervous, and agreeable prose which entitles him to be regarded as a legitimate descendant of the *chroniqueurs de geste*. Such indeed he was, in spirit as well as

<sup>1</sup> Froissart, 1237—about 1419; Commines, 1415-1509.



in style. The subject which he selected, or which he found ready to his hand, was a record of chivalry as romantic as the Carolingian epics constituted by the earlier Norman *chansons*. It may at once be admitted that Froissart was in a sense less patriotic than the majority of his predecessors or successors ; and perhaps no historian can fall short in patriotism, as we understand the word, without gaining somewhat in fidelity. His first and kindest patron was Philippa of Hainault, wife of Edward III. of England. Froissart was a favourite of the English court ; and had lived also in Scotland, Spain, and Gascony. He was, in short, a cosmopolitan ; he spoke, thought, and wrote like one. His own countrymen have accused him of displaying his gratitude in his history ; Marie Joseph Chénier went so far as to style him a “valet des princes.” He hardly seems to merit so much contempt. Having described him as a prose trouvère and as a cosmopolitan, we have given the measure of his literary and historical value.

At the suggestion of Philippa’s father, Robert of Namur, he wrote the chronicles on which his fame is built. The first edition bore for its title, *Chroniques de France, d’Angleterre, d’Ecosse, d’Espagne, de Bretagne, de Gascogne, de Flandre et pays d’alentour*. If this grandiloquent description is not sufficient to show the value which he placed on his work, read his own opinion frankly set forth—

“I well know, that in time to come, when I shall be dead, this grand and noble history will be much in vogue, and all noble and valiant men will take delight therein, and an example to act well. I also considered that, thanks to God, I have good sense and a retentive memory, and a thorough remembrance of all past occurrences, with a clear understanding to comprehend the facts I should gain information of, relative to my principal matters, and also having strength of body, and at a time of life to undergo difficulties ; I therefore determined not to remain idle in the pursuit of the truth of distant occurrences, nor to employ any other but myself in this inquiry. In consequence,

I availed myself of an opportunity of visiting that high and redoubted prince Gaston Phoebus, Count de Foix and de Bearn."<sup>1</sup>

Yet who will say that his boast is not justified by the event? It may be that with a superior subject he is less of a true historian than Villehardouin or Joinville. "Little enough of a cleric," as he describes himself, "fond of seeing dances, hearing minstrels and words of pleasant conceit," with "pleasure for his law," candidly setting "battle and pleasure" above every other consideration, he misses the severity and dignity of the earlier prose chroniclers, but he surpasses them in vivacity, detailed interest, and, possibly, in the close faithfulness of his pictures of men and events. Moreover, as a painter of chivalrous deeds, and as the "own correspondent" of his times, as ubiquitous *cicerone* of a battle-field—witness his account of Poitiers—he does, in fact, fulfil his prophecy that posterity would find in his "history" both pleasure and example of noble acts. Montaigne says of him: "I love . . . the worthy Froissart, who has gone on his work with such a frank simplicity, that, having committed a fault, he is no way ashamed of avowing it, and correcting it at the place where he is informed of it—and who tells us the diversity of rumours which were current, and the different accounts that were told to him. It is history naked and unadorned: every one may profit by it, according to the depth of his understanding."

To Philippe de Commines, a native of Lille, we owe an

<sup>1</sup> "Je savais bien que un temps à venir et quand je serai mort, sera cette haute et noble histoire en grand cours, et y prendront tous, nobles et vaillants hommes, plaisir et exemple de bien faire; et entrement que j'avais, Dieu merci, sens, mémoire et bonne souvenance de toutes les choses passées, engin clair et aigu pour concevoir tous les faits dont je pourrais être informé, touchans à ma principale matière; âge, corps et membre pour souffrir peine, me avisai que je ne voulais me séjourner de non poursuivre ma matière, et pour savoir la vérité de lointaines besoignes, sans que j'envoyasse aucune autre personne au lieu de moi, pris voie et achaison raisonnable d'aller devers haut prince et redouté seigneur Gaston, comte de Foix et de Bern."—Froissart's *Chronique*, book iii. ch. xxiii.

appreciative, not to say an indiscriminate portrait, of Louis XI. ; a king who has been more frequently blamed and satirised than praised, but who has been described, and probably with justice, as<sup>1</sup> “of ready, quick, and versatile spirit, shrewd and dissimulating in his enterprises, prompt in the commission of faults for which he atoned at his leisure, and by sheer weight of gold.” Such, in fact, is the character which Communes gives of him,<sup>2</sup> though with many a gloss and apology. He has the art of a true narrator, and does not set up for being a philosopher. He tells us straight out what he wishes to tell—probably most of the evil as well as most of the good points of his hero ; and wastes no words in trying to arrange them upon a preconceived plan. The sayings and doings of the king are thus recorded in the most natural manner, and gain our implicit credence. In *Quentin Durward*<sup>3</sup> Sir Walter Scott makes Louis XI. converse with Communes, and the latter answer the king in a manner which they naturally must have used with one another. No doubt the novelist had before his eyes the special relations existing between the monarch and his subject, which resulted in the writing of the biography ; and he puts into the king’s mouth words which he is very likely to have used to his satellite, without wishing that we should take them as literally true. For it is a question whether Communes was either specially conscientious or a remarkably good diplomatist ; and he certainly does not make pretension to the former virtue in his writings. On the contrary, if he has to report any such equivocal sentiment of the king’s as this : “He who has gain has glory,” he never dreams of making it the text for a reflection of any kind, but gives it at least the partial approbation of silence.

Communes is chiefly known as the historian of Louis XI., but Charles VIII. employed him also in diplomatic negotia-

<sup>1</sup> Etienne Pasquier in his Letter to the Lord of Bissy.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Mémoires*.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter xxx.

tions, and he was present at the battle of Fornovo. Louis XII. did not use his talents, and thus he employed his leisure in writing his *Mémoires*. The following extract, describing the death of Charles VIII., is one of the rare passages in which our author shows some faint traces of emotion, and is a very fair sample of his ordinary style, simple and to the point, not without the adornments of a natural and unstudied eloquence : —

The king being in such great glory in relation to the world, and in such a good mind as to God, on the 7th of April 1498, being the eve of Palm Sunday, took his queen (Anne of Bretagne) by the hand, and led her out of her chamber to a place where she had never been before, to see them play at tennis in the castle ditch. They entered together into a gallery called the Haquelebac Gallery, upon the account of its having been formerly guarded by one Haquelebac. It was the nastiest place about the castle, broken down at the entrance. . . . The king was not a tall man, yet he knocked his head as he went in. He spent some time in looking upon the players, and talked freely with everybody. I was not there myself (for I had gone to my country-house about a week before), but his confessor, the Bishop of Angers, and the gentlemen of his bed-chamber, who were then about him, told me what I write. The last expression he used whilst he was in health was, that he hoped never to commit a mortal sin again, nor a venial sin if he could help it ; and with those words in his mouth he fell down backwards and lost his speech. It was about two in the afternoon when he fell, and he lay motionless till eleven o'clock at night. Thrice he recovered his speech, but he quickly lost it again, as his confessor told me, who had confessed him twice that week—once of course, and a second time upon occasion of his touching for the King's evil. Every one went into the gallery that pleased, where the king was laid upon a coarse bed ; and he never left it till he died, which was nine hours after. The confessor told me that every time he recovered his speech he called out upon God, the glorious Virgin Mary, St. Claude, and St. Blaise, to assist him. And thus died that great and powerful monarch in a sordid and



filthy place, though he had so many magnificent palaces of his own, and was building another more stately than any of them, yet he died in this poor chamber. How plain, then, and natural is it, from these two examples, for us to acknowledge the power and omnipotence of God, and that our life is but a span and a trifle, though we are so greedy and ambitious after the riches of this world ; and that princes no more than peasants are able to resist the Almighty." <sup>1</sup>

We must not quit the century, nor the literary limit, without referring to another prose-writer, Christine de Pisan ; <sup>2</sup> the first Frenchwoman who, at all events in prose, gave evidence of a finished literary perception. Brought up at the

<sup>1</sup> "Estant le Roy en cette grande gloire, quant au monde, et en bon vouloir, quant à Dieu, le septième jour d'avril, l'an mil quatre cens quatre-vingt-dix-huit, veille de Pasques flories, il partit de la chambre de la Reine Anne de Bretagne, sa femme, et la mena avec luy, pour voir jouer à la paume ceux qui joüoient aux fossez du chasteau où il ne l'avoit jamais menée que cette fois, et entrèrent ensemble en une galerie, qu'on appelloit la galerie d'Haquelebac, parceque cettuy Haquelebac l'avoit eüe autrefois en garde, et estoit le plus deshonnete lieu de ceans et étoit rompiüe à l'entrée . . . et s'y heurta le Roy du front, contre l'huys, combien qu'il fut bien petit, et puis regarda longtemps les joüeurs, et devisoit à tout le monde. Je n'y estois point présent : mais son dit confesseur l'Evesque d'Angers, et ses prochains chambelans, le m'ont conté ; car j'en estois party huit jours avant, et estois allé à ma maison. La dernière parole qu'il prononça jamais en devisant en santé, c'estoit qu'il dit qu'il avoit espérance de ne faire jamais péché mortel, ne véniel s'il pouvoit, et en disant cette parole il cheut à l'envers, et perdit la parole (il pouvait être deux heures après midy) et demeura là jusques à onze heures de nuict. Trois fois lui revint la parole ; mais peu luy dura, comme me conta ledit confesseur, qui deux fois cette semaine l'avoit confessé. Toute personne entroit en la dite galerie, qui vouloit, et le trouvoit-on couché sur une pauvre paillasse, dont jamais il ne partit, jusques à ce qu'il eut rendu l'âme, et y fut neuf heures. Ledit confesseur, qui tousiours y fut, me dit que lorsque la parole luy revint à toutes les trois fois il disoit : 'Mon Dieu, et la glorieuse Vierge Marie, Monseigneur saint Claude, Monseigneur saint Blaise me soit en ayde !' et ainsi départit de ce monde si puissant et si grand Roy, et en si misérable lieu, qui tant avoit de belles maisons, et en faisoit une si belle, et si ne sceut à ce besoin finir d'une pauvre chambre. Combien donc se peut, par ces deux exemples cy-dessus couchez, cognoistre la puissance de Dieu estre grande, et que c'est peu de chose que de nostre misérable vie, qui tant nous donne de peine pour les choses du monde, et que les Roys n'y peuvent résister non plus que les laboureurs."—*Mémoires de Commynes*, Bk. viii. ch. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 1363-1430.

court of Charles V. until she was seventeen years old, she was happy in the king's protection. Upon the death of her patron she published a panegyric, under the title of *Les Faits et bonnes Moeurs du sage Roi Charles V.* There can be no doubt that Christine de Pisan had studied the ancient classical, or post-classical models, and that she deserved the praise which Marot lavished on her "knowledge and teaching." The forerunner of Marguerite de Valois, Christine was born out her time. She too belonged to the Renaissance; and her star would have shone more brightly in a brighter atmosphere. She also wrote verses, and some of them show great naturalness of expression, as well as delicacy of feeling.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. THE CHURCH AND THE DRAMA.

By all that we have hitherto seen, the Church in the Middle Ages had not yet completed her task. She had used her influence originally for good, by strengthening and purifying social bonds, by inculcating obedience to constituted authorities, by imposing upon rough and turbulent natures a code of duty towards God and man. It is true that by abuse of the highest privileges she had brought some discredit upon religion ; and that, through ambition and greed, she had first connived at the wars of discordant states, and then adopted warfare as the readiest means of self-aggrandisement. It is true, that both by her virtues and her crimes she was fulfilling the idea of her far-sighted founder, in destroying the corrupt civilisations and cultures of the past, upon the ruins whereof might be built something more valuable and lasting. The refinement, the learning, the literature, the drama of Greece and Rome disappeared from the world, or lingered almost exclusively amongst the more educated of Christian professors, who thought themselves entitled to feast in secret upon what was banned to the ignorant many ; the reflected glory of the south, which had for a few centuries illumined the ingenuous minds of the Gallo-Romans, became extinct amongst their posterity, or, if it survived in any degree, was latent in expectation of a glorious revival. The natural gift of eloquence which had revealed itself in the Gallic orators and panegyrists in the time of the last Roman Emperors was but ill repre-

sented by the later French doctors and professors. The Church had laid her chilling fingers upon all mere worldly culture and learning, and even the brief glow of intelligence which distinguished the days of Charlemagne was checked and dimmed by the mists of ecclesiastical narrowness through which it would in vain have attempted to break. The poetic outbursts of the eleventh and succeeding centuries were in themselves acts of rebellion against the spirit of ecclesiasticism, a rebellion which made itself felt by satire and parody and even open defiance—a rebellion, in fact, which expressed itself in non-poetic minds by the formidable heresies of the south. For, after all, the Provençal poetry and the Albigensian heresy were but two distinct and dissimilar manifestations of one and the same effort of humanity to assert its independence. The Crusades to the Holy Land diverted and dissipated what might have proved to be an irresistible revolt; but the gallant self-assertion of French intellect and imagination had already succeeded in opening up the paths whereby a future age was to march forward to liberty.

For, in spite of herself, the Church steadily contributed to the downfall of her sway over the human mind. Her ecclesiastical dominion could be maintained only by stamping out, completely and unremittingly, every spark of superior intelligence, and forbidding, even in her own ministers, the cultivation of profane knowledge. If her policy had been directed throughout by a stern and individual will, such a supreme act of violation might, indeed, have been possible; and the annihilation of independent human thought would have resulted in the despotic subjection of the human race. But this policy, constant in its main principles and modes of operation, varied in details, and in the thoroughness of its application, with every new pope, and council, and ecclesiastical authority. The mental activity which was discouraged in the laymen should have been a crime in the priest and



monk ; for knowledge is the mother of rebellion, and it was in the Church itself that the seeds of revolt first swelled and germinated. And thus, in the Church itself, at the moment when it had been brought safely through the greatest dangers, and had conquered its most formidable enemies, we find a worse foe than any that had hitherto menaced its authority, already struggling to cast off an unnatural and uncongenial allegiance.

The Church had adopted the Drama, as a handmaid peculiarly fitted to do her worthy and valuable service. For, in demanding that men should dispense with and despise the pleasures of the senses which the world had to offer them, and in cutting off the source of such compensation as they might have obtained through the intellect, it became necessary that she should herself minister to the natural demands of humanity, and provide in her own domain the attraction which she forbade them to seek outside. She expanded the worship of God into a spectacle, the sacred edifice into a theatre, the altar into a stage. The work was thoroughly and admirably done ; the rude, simple, ignorant people learned to attend upon the offices of religion with eager anticipation, as affording to them the brightest and lightest moments of their lives. They came away, not mystified or wearied by what they had heard and seen, but charmed and refreshed. Without, they had cares and troubles, anxieties and pains ; within, they had pleasant and appetising food for eye and ear, for imagination and reflection. The Church was in fact the club of the Middle Ages, always open, always peaceful and cheerful, nearly always entertaining. The whole social life of the age appears to have taken refuge within the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was the mere performance of divine worship, pompous and gorgeous as it gradually became, the limit of the spectacles presented to the congregation. Veritable dramas were

<sup>1</sup> Michelet.

enacted in many of the cathedrals, which rivalled in attractiveness all that tradition could recall of the infamous exhibitions of Rome.<sup>1</sup> A double reason suggested and warranted the first introduction of these *quasi*-sacred dramas into the Church. Not only was it necessary to hold out a constant allurements to the people, but the time came when the majority of the congregation no longer understood the language of prayer and hymn, and when the heart must be reached, if at all, directly through the bodily senses. The first Christian drama was a gesture; it was by a succession of gestures that the priests and their assistants were constrained to illustrate and interpret their dead-letter of devotion. On Ascension day a priest was wont to stand in his surplice upon the outer gallery of Nôtre-Dame, and with outstretched arms represent the assumption of Christ into heaven. On the feast of Pentecost a dove figured the presence of the Holy Ghost, whilst tongues of fire descended from the roof of the church. At Easter, three men, dressed in white robes, with hoods upon their heads, a silver flask of consecrated oil in their hands, interpreted the story of the three Marys proceeding to the sepulchre, whilst a fourth, in the form of an angel, announced to them the resurrection of their Lord. At Christmas, the infant Jesus was shown in his manger, the Magi and the shepherds gathered round, the youngest choristers playing the parts of angels from the galleries. From spectacles such as these not even the lower animals were excluded; the oxen present at the birth of Christ, the ass which carried him into Egypt, the cock which crowed the conviction of Peter,—all were admitted.

Little by little, embellishments of the sacred narrative, and, later still, inventions found an entry into these ecclesiastical dramas. The *Mystère d'Adam*, the work of a priest in the twelfth century, was acted at the church doors by priests who doffed their vestments in order to put on—with more

<sup>1</sup> See Ernest Rénaud, *L'Antéchrist*, p. 169.

of decency than dramatic fidelity—the costumes appropriate to their richly decorated stage. We can picture the attractive show which was thus freely offered to the crowd of attentive spectators—quaint figures of a rude and restless epoch, who stood gaping round the church porch. The “properties” of the stage were the furniture and the vestments of the sacred building itself, which served the actors for a green-room. The platform was decked with flowers and shrubs, to represent the precincts of the Garden of Eden; whilst a higher stage, raised round the sides of the porch, denoted the central Paradise. The scene opens, showing the Saviour in an embroidered dalmatic; Adam standing before him dressed in a red tunic, attentive to his commands; Eve, with bowed head, dressed in a long white robe, with a veil of spotless silk. Less elaborate than the costumes was the machinery of this strange drama, though even this, in its rude ingenuity, rivalled the realistic efforts of our own stage carpenters. Satan, appearing in his serpent’s garb<sup>1</sup> crawled about the stage, and even up the trunk of the forbidden tree. The acting was no less rude, and no less effective. After our first parents had been driven out of Paradise, and had tilled a little soil with much labour and pain, Satan takes advantage of their absence to sow thistles and briers. The couple returning, and perceiving the work of their enemy, express their despair by rolling upon the ground.

What of the language in which this Biblical melodrama is unfolded? It is but natural that we should find less awkwardness in the production of the poetic than of the histrionic art. And, in fact, Adam, and in a special degree Satan, are but the troubadours of the fall. The latter approaches Eve with much the same sort of flattery as that wherewith a Provençal in the twelfth century approached his mistress “Thou art a feeble and tender thing, and art more fresh than is the rose; thou art more white than crystal, than

<sup>1</sup> “*Artificiose compositus*,” as the directions of the play informs us.

snow which falls on ice in the valley. A sorry couple has the Creator made of you ; thou art too tender, and Adam too harsh. But nevertheless thou art the more wise ; thou hast set thy heart on great common-sense." The language of God to Adam is the language of the *ensenhamen*, full of sage advice ; and Adam replies like a pattern Sir Charles Grandison. "Great gratitude I render to thy goodness, who created me, and dost me such kindness that thou hast set both good and ill within me. I will make it my desire to serve thee. Thou art my Lord, I am thy creature ; thou moulded me, and I am of thy making. My will shall never be so harsh but that my whole care shall be to serve thee." There is, no doubt, a dignity and wholesome severity in the decasyllables of God ; and we may probably discern in Satan's verse, shorn as it is of a metre, the desire to parody, as well as to imitate, the romantic love-language of the day.

## § 2. THE MIRACLE PLAYS.

Such was the religious drama as it gained form and completeness ; and it was not long before its authors went for their subjects beyond the limits of Scripture. The Bible-plays soon gave place to, or rather were recruited by, miracle-plays ; and the thirteenth century furnishes at least two of these which are still extant—the *Miracle de Théophile*, by Rutebeuf, and the *Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, by Jean Bodel. The former appears to have been founded on a Latin narrative, recording the apostasy and recantation of Theophilus, *vidame* of the church of Adana.<sup>1</sup> Theophilus has been dismissed from his office ; he rails at his misfortune, and ends by railing at God. The devil promises to redeem his fortunes at the price of his soul ; and, the compact being made, bids him be of good cheer. This is the recommendation Satan gives to him :—

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 538.



"Theophilus, most gentle friend,  
 Since thou hast placed thyself in my hands,  
 I will tell thee what thou must do.  
 Thou must never love a poor man :  
 If a poor man surprises thee and prays to thee,  
 Turn away thy ears, go thy way ;  
 If any one humbles himself before thee,  
 Answer (with) pride and deceit ;  
 If a poor man asks at thy door,  
 Take care that he does not carry away alms.  
 Gentleness, humility, mercy  
 And charity and friendship,  
 To fast and to do penance,  
 Put great affliction in my stomach.  
 To give alms and to pray to God  
 This would annoy me much ;  
 To love God and to live chastely  
 Then seem to me a serpent and a viper  
 Eats my heart and stomach.  
 When one enters the hospital  
 To look at a sick person,  
 Then feel I my heart so dead and unpleasant,  
 That I think that it does not beat ;  
 He who acts well thus torments me ;  
 Go away, thou seneschal,  
 Abandon good (works) and do evil." <sup>1</sup>

"Théophiles, biaux douz amis,  
 Puisque tu t'es en mes mains mis,  
 Je te dirai que tu feras,  
 Jamès povre homme n'ameras :  
 Se povres hom sorpris te proie,  
 Torne l'oreille, va ta voie ;  
 S'aucuns envers toi s'umelie  
 Respon orgueil et félonie ;  
 Se pauvres demande à ta porte,  
 Si gardes qu'aumosne n'enporte.  
 Douçor, humilitez, pitiez,  
 Et charitez et amistiez,  
 Jeûne fère, pénitance

Me metent grant duel en la pance ;  
 Aumosne fère et Dieu proier,  
 Ce me repuet trop anoir ;  
 Dieu amer et chastement vivre,  
 Lors me samble serpent et guivre  
 Me menjue le cuer et le ventre.  
 Quant l'en en la meson Dieu entre  
 Por regarder aucun malade,  
 Lors ai le cuer si mort et fade  
 Qu'il m'est avis que point n'en sent ;  
 Cil qui fet bien si me tormente.  
 Va-t-en ! tu seras sénéchaus :  
 Lai les biens et si fai les maus."

A hospital was formerly called a *maison Dieu*, and there is even now one in Paris, named *l'hôtel Dieu*.

However, Theophilus does not reap his reward from Satan ; he is restored by the bishop to his former office. Then he repents, and invokes Mary in the following words :—

“ My Lady, I dare not,  
Flower of the eglantine and the lily and the rose ;  
In whom the Son of God rests,  
What shall I do ?  
I feel myself wickedly bound  
To the evil-doing madman  
I do not know what to do ;  
I shall never leave off praying.  
Virgin, maiden debonnaire,  
Honoured Lady,  
My soul shall be indeed destroyed,  
When it shall dwell in hell  
With Cain.”<sup>1</sup>

He obtains from her the annulment of the infernal compact, apparently without the resignation of his benefice ; for all the world like the real-life repentance of the nineteenth century.

The play of *Saint Nicolas* is by several degrees more profane in its treatment than Rutebeuf's drama, and, as it is by no means certain that it was ever acted in the church porch, we may now be in the presence of the first liberation of the Middle Age drama from ecclesiastical tutelage. Jean Bodel was a trouvère living at Arras,<sup>2</sup> whose latter life was the acme of human misery, for he died a leper. His work is even less original than the *Miracle de Théophile*. It is based upon a *ludus* of the monk Hilarius, also about Saint Nicolas. A rich

<sup>1</sup> “ Dame je n'ose  
Flors d'aiglantier et lis et rose ;  
En qui li filz Diex se repose,  
Que feroi-gié ?  
Malement ne sent engagié,  
Envers le manté engagié.  
Ne sai que feroi :

Jamais ne finrai de brère.  
Virge pucelle debonnaire,  
Dame Honorée,  
Bien sera m'ame dévorée,  
Qu'en enfer sera demoree  
Avec Cain.”

<sup>2</sup> 1165-1223.

pagan kept a statue of the saint to stand guard over his treasures, but some robbers passing by his house, and finding the doors open, carry off the gold, leaving the saint behind them. The pagan returns, and, discovering his loss, flies into a rage with his statue, and beats it without mercy. The statue, moved from its impassibility by such treatment, lets itself out by night, overtakes the robbers, and restores the treasure, whereupon the pagan is added to the number of the believers. Such was the original legend, but Bodel varied it by converting the pagan into a Mussulman king, who, about to go to war with the Christians, consults his statue of Tervagant. He appeals to it in these words: "If I shall gain, then laugh; and if I lose, then weep." Tervagant, to be on the safe side, did both, which the king's seneschal interpreted to mean that his master should conquer in fight and should then submit to Christianity. The first part of this forecast having proved correct, the king is resting from his labours when a prisoner is brought before him who takes occasion to extol the power of Saint Nicolas. The king desires to test the saint's power, and causes proclamation to be made as follows: "*Oïés, oïés*, masters all; come before me, give heed. On the part of the king; who gives you to know that he will never have key nor bolt to his treasure nor to his property. Just as on the open ground, it may be discovered, so it seems to me; and he who can steal it, let him steal it." It is stolen, and it is restored, the original fable being here tacked on to the new introduction in a manner which need not be further explained.

The speciality of Bodel's drama is a peculiarly secular one, and it is hardly probable that the ecclesiastical actors, however anxious they may have been to keep the entertainment of their congregations in their own hands, would have had the courage to underline the play of *Saint Nicolas* for representation in the church porch. The moral of the plot is clearly favourable to Christianity, but the best and most lively scenes

are those which deal with tavern life, its brawls and amusements, its dice and drink, its company and its jests. Nothing could be more welcome to the masses than a farce dealing, as this did, with the familiar scenes of their everyday life, and no better medium could have been found for the enforcement of morality by home-thrusts of good-natured satire, but it was just a little too broad and reckless for the theatre of the priests. It was, indeed, an age in which an English dignitary of the Church could write that he had made up his mind to die in a tavern,<sup>1</sup> but even he would not have made his joke before the congregation and from the church porch. The play of *Saint Nicolas* abounds in tavern scenes. When the king sends out his courier Auberon to summon his feudatories for the war, the latter halts on his road at a place of entertainment, and, the time coming for him to settle his account, calls for the dice, plays until he has enough in hand, settles with the host, and goes away in high good humour. In another tavern we come upon the advertising medium of the period, a public crier of wine, who vaunts his employer's wares in this fashion :—

“Wine newly tapped,  
By the full quart and the full cask,  
Healthy, worth drinking, full-bodied,  
Frisking like a squirrel in the wood,  
With no taste of impurity or sourness,  
(Wine) which runs upon the lees, dry and sharp,  
Clear as a sinner's tears ;  
Clinging to the tongues of good judges . . .  
See how it gets rid of its froth,  
And leaps, and sparkles, and bubbles.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “*Meum est propositum in tabernâ mori.*”—*Walter Map*.

<sup>2</sup> “*Le vin aforé de nouvel,  
A plein lot et à plein tonnel  
Sage bevant et plein et gros,  
Rampant comme escureus en bos,  
Sans nul mois de pourri ne d'aigre*      *Seur lie court et sec et maigre,  
Clair com larme de pecheour ;  
Croupant sur langue a locheour  
Voi com il mangue s' escume,  
Et saut et estinciele et frit.*”



It was the frequenters of the tavern who stole the king's treasures, and the host who concealed them. Excellent moral, only a little weakened in face of the fact that it was by entering the hospitable doors that the seneschal discovered the theft, and by tipsy gossip that the robbers betrayed themselves.

Probably the first stage which rivalled that of the ecclesiastics was erected in the house of some wealthy citizen who had acquired a taste for the drama in the cathedral close, and who desired an opportunity of looking on at a comedy with a little more breadth of subject and language. At all events we hear about this time of meetings attended by the citizens of various towns in France, at which dramatic representations took place.<sup>1</sup> Before such an audience in Arras, no doubt, Bodel's play was originally acted, and presently afterwards Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la Feuillie*.<sup>2</sup> Adam is his own hero; his domestic troubles are the theme of his comedy. He comes in dressed in priestly garb, and says to his audience: "My lords, should you like to know why I have changed my coat? I have been living with a wife; now I return to the clergy." He satirises his fellow-townsmen, carping at their love of gambling, at their gluttony and license, at the frailty of their women, even at the decrees of the Pope—being by no means the first or the last public censor created by private wrongs. The second act introduces us to the household (*mesnie*) of King Hallequin (anglicè "Harlequin"), a company of fairies comprising Morgue, Maglore, Arsile, and others, who have been invited to a feast by Adam and his fellow-citizen Riquesse. Unfortunately they have forgotten to place a knife for Maglore, so that when, after the feast, the other fairies have given their customary presents to the hosts, she uses her power by taking them all away again; whereupon the author and actor breaks out into a string of jesting

<sup>1</sup> These assemblies came to be called *puys*—a name, it is suggested, due to the fact that they were originated in Puy-en-Velay.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 1261.

applications of this pretty moral to each and all of his hearers. The scene changes, and we find ourselves in a tavern, a monk being in the company. He drinks himself to sleep, and the rest at once conceive the plan of making him pay for the score of all those who are there. When he awakes he naturally objects, but in vain, so that in the end he is obliged to leave his relics in pawn.

A pastoral drama by the same author, and produced in the same place, *Robin et Marion*, was very popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It grew out of an old song with the burden "Robin loves me, I am Robin's," which Marion is singing when the scene opens. The gay cavalier, destined to become so attractive and finished a character in the hands of Molière,<sup>1</sup> approaches and does his best to gain her favour, but she scornfully rejects him. He gives place to Robin, whom Marion informs of her adventure. Robin seeks the advice and assistance of his brother shepherds, who armed with sticks place themselves on the road near the meadows where Marion is still wiling away her time. The knight returns and renews his suit with no more luck than before, and Robin appears on the scene. Of him the youthful noble takes no account, save to strike him contemptuously with his glove, which suffices to cool the courage of the country clown. But Marion is her own best protectress, and the knight is compelled to relinquish his attempt. No sooner is he gone than the shepherds assemble in great force, and after a little jesting at Robin's cowardice we have the since familiar spectacle of a "ballet de bergers."

It is evident enough that Adam de la Halle would not allow much virtue or manliness in any of his fellow-creatures, but he undoubtedly had the French gift of satire very fully developed, and must be held responsible for a great deal of the stereotyped form of dramatic raillery which we have since

<sup>1</sup> See *Lélie*, *Eraste*, *Valère*, *Horace*, *Clitandre*, and, above all, *Don Juan*.

come to regard as a national inheritance in France. The young would-be gallant is not the only character familiar to us which owes its original creation, or at least its naturalisation, to Adam de la Halle, who deserves great credit as the father of French comedy. His conceptions are eminently clever, his satire is bitter but trenchant and witty, and he was amongst the first to teach his countrymen the terrible power of that two-edged sword which is perhaps their most formidable weapon. And yet the seed which he sowed was long in bearing fruit. He was not without imitators in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the mysteries were destined for some time longer to occupy the place of honour on the stage. The church porch had made these semi-religious comedies fashionable and respectable, and in the fourteenth century there were few French cities in which they were not publicly represented in the squares or just without the walls. Philip the Fair was a generous patron of the drama, and welcomed the actors at his court, whilst the municipal authorities vied with each other in supporting them. Nor were these dramas always in the nature of comedies or burlesques of Scripture narrative. The Passion-Play was regularly acted almost year by year. At Valenciennes we hear of its being protracted over five-and-twenty days. At Angers it occupied nearly a week, after being introduced by the *Veni Creator*. True, the histrionic art did not absorb the whole of the time, for one of the most significant circumstances of this literary and social phenomenon was the combination of the drama pure and simple with dramatic predication.

### § 3. THE STAGE, THE COMEDIES, AND THE ACTORS.

The stage on which religious plays were acted—especially such as introduced the Deity amongst the *dramatis personæ*,

and heaven amongst the scenic effects—was one at which we must not fail to glance. It was, in fact, a development of the church porch already referred to. Imagine our modern theatres ; people the stage with spectators, the dress circle and upper boxes with actors ; this gives a fair approximate notion of the buildings or temporary erections in which the mysteries were wont to be represented. The stage was, in fact, a manifold one, and may not inaptly be compared to a girl's doll's house : the uppermost story accommodating heaven, with the Father sitting in state, supported by personified virtues, such as Justice, Pity, Hope, and the chorus of angels and archangels. In this heaven also was the orchestra ; or at least the organ and the choir, which the orchestra was afterwards to replace. Beneath was the earth ; and at the bottom of all, Satan and his imps played the pranks which became their evil reputation, and writhed in impotent envy at every sign of a miracle above. Of course there was a ladder to connect this tripartite arrangement of the world, more easy of descent than of ascent.

Amongst the favourite mysteries and other religious dramas of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were many in which profane history had not unfrequently its share of the dramatist's attention.<sup>1</sup> The mysteries, in fact, began to go tolerably far afield for their subjects ; to the Crusades, for instance, and to more recent French history. Thus, between the years 1429 and 1470 we read of the representation of the *Mystère du Siège d'Orléans*, in which, of course, Jeanne d'Arc occupies the place of the saint whose miraculous career is commemorated. With this wider latitude of subject came, naturally, a wider variety amongst the actors. The histrionic art was no longer confined to ecclesiastics and to citizens endowed with a certain amount of leisure, cultivation, and

<sup>1</sup> *Robert le Diable, la Noëe enlevée, le Baptême de Clovis, la Marquise de Gaudine, le Voyage de Saint Louis en Terre Sainte.*



wealth. The artizans of the large towns took to following the stage as a means of increasing their incomes, even if they may not be said, at the close of the fourteenth century, to have adopted it as an exclusive profession. At all events the year 1398 was marked by the establishment of a company, by royal patent, devoted to the production of *mystères*; and the corporation or *Confrérie de la Passion*, as it was called, soon laid by money, bought land, and built a theatre. They kept very steadily to their original part, never seeking to strike out a new line for themselves, although naturally inclined, or led by the taste of their audience, to the most lax and profane of the plays at their disposal.

But the Church began at last to take alarm at the popularity of these more questionable dramas. Villon had his part in aggravating the fear, as we shall presently see; and the civil government agreed with the ecclesiastics. A sentence of the *procureur-général* of Paris, of the date of 1542, speaks of "these unlettered people, of no understanding in such matters, of the lowest condition, such as a carpenter, an upholsterer, a fishmonger, who have played the *Acts of the Apostles*, adding thereto various apocryphal things. Both the managers and the players are ignorant men, not knowing A from B, who were never instructed nor trained for the stage." Six years later, Parliament renewed the privilege of the corporation of the brethren of the Passion, but gave them authority only for "lawful, profane, and proper subjects," and expressly excluding the representation of sacred mysteries. It was a blow from which the *confrérie* never recovered.

Theatrical companies of quite a different complexion were those of the *Enfants Sans-Souci* and the *Cleres de la Basoche*, who, with the simplest possible stage and accessories, contented themselves with playing farces and *soeties*, although they were not long in rising to the level of poetic dramas. Their rivalry with the *Confrères de la Passion* was not dissimilar, if

we make all due allowance, from the rivalry between the company of Molière, more than a century later, and the cultivators of the severer style at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Like the latter, the old *confrérie* at the *Hôpital de la Trinité* began to find the public slipping away from them, and sought to bring them back by condescending to buffoonery and burlesque. But they ended by coalescing with the *Enfants Sans-Souci*. Amongst their most distinguished members was Clément Marot, whose favour with the king rescued his company from imminent suppression in 1512. We give the general invitation which "the Prince of Fools," the elective chief of the *Enfants*, was wont to address to the public in announcing a forthcoming representation :

"Lunatic fools, fools giddy, fools wise,  
Town fools, fools in the castles, village fools,  
Fools doating, fools artless, fools subtle,  
Fools amorous, fools private, savage fools,  
Fools old and new, and fools of every age,  
Fools barbarous, strange, and genteel,  
Fools reasonable, fools perverse, fools stubborn,  
Your prince, without any intervals,  
Shall act his plays on Shrove Tuesday at the halls."<sup>1</sup>

One of the favourite pieces in the répertoire of these companies was the *Farce du Cuvier*, which displays a very quaint and characteristic French humour. Jaquinot is a henpecked husband, whose round of household duties is never completed, and rarely even attempted to the satisfaction of the exacting

<sup>1</sup> "Sots lunatiques, sots étourdis, sots sages,  
Sots de villes, sots de châteaux, sots de villages,  
Sots rassottez, sots nyais, sots subtils,  
Sots amoureux, sots privez, sots sauvages,  
Sots vieux, nouveaux, et sots de tous âges,  
Sots barbares, étranges, et gentils,  
Sots raisonnables, sots pervers, sots rétifs,  
Votre prince, sans nulles intervalles,  
Le mardi gras jouera ses jeux aux halles."

wife. The written list of his duties requires him to bake, to attend to the oven, to wash, to sift, to cook, to go, to come, to bustle, to run, to bake the bread, to heat the oven, to bring the corn to the mill, to make the bed early in the morning, to put the pot on the fire, to keep the kitchen clean, to wash up the pots, the plates, and the dishes. One day whilst he was helping his wife to wash the linen, she unfortunately tumbles into the copper. There is no one but Jaquinot to assist her ; but she begs and entreats him in vain. Her training has been only too successful, for, earnestly as he consults his list, he can find no mention of this particular duty. The scene is lively enough to deserve quoting, and will remind the reader of many a later, and no more spirited, parallel.

*Wife (in the copper).* Good husband, save my life. I am already quite fainting, give me your hand a while.

*Jaquinot.* It is not in my list. . .

*Wife.* Alas ! who will hear me ? Death will come and take me away.

*Jaquinot (reading his list).* "To bake, to attend to the oven, to wash, to sift, and to cook."

*Wife.* My blood is already quite changed ; I am at the point of death.

*Jaquinot (continuing to read).* "To rub, to mend, to keep bright the kitchen utensils."

*Wife.* Come quickly to my assistance.

*Jaquinot.* "To come, to go, to bustle, to run."

*Wife.* Never shall I pass this day.

*Jaquinot.* "To bake the bread, to heat the oven."

*Wife.* Ah, your hand ; I am approaching my last moment.

*Jaquinot.* "To bring the corn to the mill."

*Wife.* You are worse than a mastiff.

*Jaquinot.* "To make the bed early in the morning."

*Wife.* Oh ! you think this is a joke.

*Jaquinot.* "And then to put the pot on the fire."

*Wife.* Oh ! where is my mother Jaquette ?

*Jaquinot.* "And to keep the kitchen clean."

*Wife.* Go and fetch the priest.

*Jaquinot.* My paper is wholly ended ; but I tell you, without more ado, that it is not on my list.

In the end the poor man extracts a promise from his wife to give him his due share of authority, and so releases her, saying, "From henceforth, then, I shall be master, for my wife allows it."

The theatre had manifestly made a great stride in France since it had its origin in the desire of the Church to increase the attractiveness of her services ; and it had also played a notable part in cultivating the tastes of the people. The influence was, of course, mutual ; for if the French character was to be confirmed and sharpened by the stage, it was from the national characteristics themselves that its peculiarities were in the first instance impressed upon it. True, there was not much in the drama preceding the Renaissance which can be said to exhibit the specialities of the nation and the literature ; but there was at all events enough to show the nature of what was to follow. There had not been much time for the growth of that luxuriant genius which was to produce and inspire a Corneille, a Racine, and a Molière, and which was eventually to make France the home of the didactic drama and the satirical comedy ; but the brief examples above given show the richness of the soil from which the harvest was to be gathered. One play remains to be noticed, worthy the name of a comedy, which was produced about the close of the fifteenth century ; the *Farce de Pathelin*, attributed variously to Villon, Antoine de la Salle, and Pierre Blanchet, and most probably the work of the latter. Pathelin is the descendant of Renard, the ancestor of Mascarille and Scapin, a "first-rate teacher of cheating," who, being reproached by his wife with their poverty, engages to provide her with handsome garments, and pitches upon a certain Guillaume Jouceaume, draper, as the victim of his skill in deception. He goes and selects some cloths, prais-



ing their beauty, and flattering the honest tradesman to the top of his bent. A long time is occupied in beating down the price, which is finally settled at nine francs ; but unfortunately the draper will not give credit to the needy starveling advocate. Pathelin resorts to another device ; he invites the draper to come to his house in the evening and share a fat goose, which is even now before the fire. The trick succeeds. The tradesman's heart is melted, and he gives up the cloth. Pathelin carries it home ; and when the draper arrives in the evening he is met by the advocate's wife, who is barely able for grief to inform him that her husband has been for eleven weeks ill in bed, and is now at the point of death. The scene changes. The draper has a farm ; and he discovers that his shepherd has been killing his sheep for his own consumption. He summons him before the judge, and chance leads the shepherd to Pathelin's door. He could not have had a better advocate. Arrived in court, the draper is commencing his tale of wrong when he suddenly recognises Pathelin. He is confounded ; he begins to wander in his mind and in his words, mixing up his sheep with the trickeries of the advocate for the accused :

“ See, my lord ; but the business affects me ;  
However, upon my faith, my mouth  
To-day will not say a single word of it. . . .  
I must swallow it,  
Without chewing . . . Now, I was saying  
How I had  
Delivered to him six yards . . . need I say  
Sheep . . . I pray you, sir,  
To pardon me.  
This fine fellow  
My shepherd, when he ought to be  
In the fields . . . he said that I should have  
Six golden crowns when I came . . .  
I say, that for three years past  
My shepherd agreed

That he would faithfully guard  
 My sheep, and would practise  
 No wrong or villany . . . And now he denies  
 Both cloth and money plainly !  
 Ah, master Peter, truly  
 This rogue here stole the wool  
 Of my sheep, and, when they were quite healthy,  
 He made them die and perish,  
 By knocking them down, and striking them  
 With a big stick on the head :  
 When my cloth was under his arm,  
 He went away very quickly,  
 And told me to come  
 For the six crowns to his house.”<sup>1</sup>

It is in vain that the judge keeps on recalling him to the point : “ Come, let us return to these sheep.” Pathelin takes advantage of his confusion, makes his client play the idiot ; until at last, wearied out by a case of which he can make neither head nor tail, the judge dismisses the suit saying to the unfortunate draper : “ I forbid you to proceed. It is very fine to listen to the complaints of a fool.” And to the shepherd : “ Return to your beasts.” But Pathelin is himself outdone by the shepherd, from whom he would fain

<sup>1</sup> “ Monseigneur ; mais le cas me touche ;

Toutesfois, par ma foy, ma bouche  
 Meshuy un seul mot n'endra . . .

Il le me convient avaller

Sans mascher . . . Or çà, je disoye,

A mon propos, comment j'avoye

Baillé six aulnes . . . Dy-je dire

Mes brebis . . . je vous en pry, sire,

Pardonnez-moy ? Ce gentil maistre

Mon bergier quant il devoit estre

Aux champs . . . il me dit que

j'auroye

Six escez d'or, quant je viendroye . . .

Dy-je, depuis trois ans en ça,

Mon berger me convença

Que loyaument me garderoit

Mes brebis, et ne my feroit

Ne dommaige ne villenie . . .

Et puis, maintenant il me nie

Et drap et argent plainement !

Ah ! maistre Pierre, vraiment,

Ce ribaut-ey m'embroit les laines

De mes bestes ; et, toutes saines,

Les faisoit mourir et périr,

Par les assommer et l'erir

De gros baston sur la cervelle . . .

Quant mon drap fut soubz son aisselle,

Il se mist en chemin grant erre,

Et me dist que j'allasse querre

Six escez d'or en sa maison.”

have extracted a fee. His too apt pupil only continues his idiocy, and thus comes off the best of all the three.

Here, clearly, is humour of the most genuine kind ; and with this bright anticipation of the Renaissance, the drama may rest for a while.

#### § 4. THE THREE LAST TROUVÈRES.

Before emerging from the Middle Ages we are arrested by three poets, different in style and in character, the last of the race of trouvères, who will not be so easily dismissed as the rest of the romantic and lyric minstrels who shed their late glory over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Frenchmen have reason to be proud of this trio, whereof one was a noble prince, another a king, and the third, eminently French, eminently endowed with the simple virtues, the brilliant frailties, the easy recklessness, of the land of his birth.

Charles of Orléans<sup>1</sup> was the son of the murdered Louis, Duke of Orleans, and of Valentine of Milan. He was taken prisoner by the English at the battle of Agincourt, and remained a captive in England for a period of twenty-five years. Yet he himself had invited, in 1410, the English to come into France, in order to assist him to avenge the death of his father. During his long sojourn in a foreign land he wrote many poems, in different languages, and sang chiefly about the beauties of nature and of love with infinite and artless grace, though he is marred not seldom by excess of allegory. His songs reflect the mind of a poet, but not the history of his times ; and even after his return, and until his death, he dallied with poetry at his court at Blois, after a vain attempt to oppose Charles VII. He was killed at last by sorrow at an angry rebuke of Louis XI. In less perilous times he might have become a great poet, but as a prince he neglected his duties. This is what he wrote when in prison :—

<sup>1</sup> 1391-1465.

“ A report has been spread in France,  
 In many places, that I was dead ;  
 Of which were not very sorry  
 Some who hate me wrongly ;  
 Others have been greatly pained,  
 Who love me loyally,  
 Like good and true friends ;  
 Therefore I let every one know  
 That the mouse is still alive.

I have had neither illness nor sorrow,  
 But, thank God, am healthy and strong  
 And pass (my) time in hope  
 That peace, which sleeps too long,  
 Shall awaken, and by treaty  
 Will bring joy to all ;  
 For this, may be cursed by God  
 Those who are sorry to see  
 That still the mouse is alive.

Youth has power over me  
 But old age does its best  
 To have me under its influence ;  
 Now it will fail in its endeavours,  
 I am far enough from its port.  
 I wish to keep my heir from weeping.  
 Praised be God in Paradise,  
 Who has given me strength and power,  
 That the mouse is still alive.

No one wears black for me,  
 Grey cloth is sold much cheaper ;  
 Now each one may know, in short,  
 That the mouse is still alive.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Nouvelles ont couru en France,  
 Par mains lieux, que j'estoye mort ;  
 Dont avoient peu de desplaisance  
 Aucuns ceux qui me hayent à tort ;  
 Autres en ont eu desconfort,

Qui m'ayment de loyal vouloir,  
 Comme mes bons et vrais amis ;  
 Si fais à toutes gens sçavoir  
 Qu'encore est vive la souris.



When Charles of Orléans had returned to France he wrote to one of his friends, who would not come to see him :

“ Let the bellman cry aloud,  
On the highway, everywhere ;  
Fredet, he is no more seen ;  
Is he put in prison ? ” <sup>1</sup>

The following *rondeau*,<sup>2</sup> which has been universally quoted and greatly admired, will justify what we have said about his appreciation of the beauties of nature :

“ The weather has doffed its cloak  
Of wind, and cold, and rain,  
It has donned embroideries  
Of sparkling, clear, and handsome sun.  
There is not an animal or bird  
But in its own tongue sings or shouts.  
The weather has doffed its cloak  
Of wind, and cold, and rain.  
River, fountain, and small stream

Je n'ai éu mal, ne grevance,  
Dieu mercy, mais sui sain et fort,  
Et passe temps en espérance  
Que Paix, qui trop longuement dort,  
S'esveillera et par accort  
A tous fera liesse avoir  
Pour ce, de Dieu soient maudis  
Ceux qui sont dolens de veoir  
Qu'encore est vive la souris

Jeunesse sur moy a puissance ;  
Mais vieillesse fait son effort  
De m'avoir en sa gouvernance,  
A present faillira son sort :  
Je suis assez loin de son port.  
De plourer veuil garder mon hoir  
Loué soit Dieu de Paradis  
Qui m'a donné force et povoir,  
Qu'encore est vive la souris.

Nul ne porte pour moy le noir,  
On vent meilleur marché drap gris ;

Or, tiengne chacun, pour tout voir,  
Qu'encore est vive la souris.”

<sup>1</sup> “ Crie soit à la clochette  
Par les ruës, sus et jus,  
Fredet, on ne le voit plus ;  
Est-il mis en oubliete ? ”

<sup>2</sup> “ Le temps a laissié son manteau  
De vent, de froidure et de pluye,  
Il s'est vestu de broderie,  
De soleil luisant, cler et beau.  
Il n'y a beste ne oiseau  
Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crye ;  
Le temps a laissié son manteau  
De vent, de froidure et de pluye,  
Riviere, fontaine et ruisseau  
Portent en livrée jolye  
Gouttes d'argent, d'orfaverie ;  
Chacun s'abille de nouveau ;  
Le temps a laissié son manteau  
De vent, de froidure et de pluye.”

Wear a handsome livery  
 Of drops of silver finely wrought ;  
 Each one puts on new clothes.  
 The weather has doffed its cloak  
 Of wind, and cold, and rain."

We give a few specimens of his English poems composed during his captivity, and of which he wrote a goodly number, whereof some display gallantry towards his princess, others lamentation upon her death. The poems of gallantry open thus:—

"The god Cupide and Venus the goddes  
 Whiche power han on all worldly gladnes  
 We hertly gretynge sende of oure humbles  
 To louers alle."

Here is a short stanza, descriptive of his uxorious regret in being alone :—

"Most goodly fayre if hit were yowre plesere,  
 So moche forto enriche yowre servant here,  
 Of recomfort of ioy and of gladnes,  
 I wolde biseche yow lady and maystres  
 Nor lete me dye as all in displesere  
 Syn that in me ther nys wele nor desere,  
 Saue trewly serue you unto my powere  
 Without eschewyng payne or hevynes,  
 For goode doon good wherfore my hertis blis  
     As for the  
     I thanke  
 Myn hert wol evir thynke him silf in greve,  
 To that desert hit ben to yow y wis,  
 Of which that long y trust ye shall not mys  
 Parcas sumwhat to raunsom yow or eve.  
     As for the  
     I thanke."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Poems written in English*, by Charles, Duke of Orleans; ed. G. W. Taylor, p. 149. In the *Collection des Documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France*, 1835, it is argued that these poems are not by Charles of Orleans, but are translations done by an English contemporary poet.

But, though he can bewail so sweetly the absence of his second spouse, who died during his captivity, he married, immediately after his liberation, in 1440, his third wife, Mary, daughter of the Duke of Cleves. His son Louis, after the death of Charles VIII., became King of France as Louis XII. Perhaps Charles of Orleans, before he was a captive, may have had some lessons in English from his first wife, Isabel, the widow of Richard the Second of England. Sometimes our royal author writes very short lines ; for example, when he says

“ Swethert  
 Mercy  
 For smert  
 Avert  
 On sert  
 Y die  
 And ye  
 Ailas  
 Pite  
 Parde  
 On me  
 Non has  
 Trewly  
 Madame  
 That y  
 On whi  
 Shulde dy  
 Were shame.”<sup>1</sup>

At other times he writes in a tripping, lively metre, which is very pretty.<sup>2</sup>

“ When that ye goo  
 Then am y woo  
 But ye swete foo  
 For ought y playne  
 Ye sett not no  
 To sle me so

<sup>1</sup> *Poems written in English*, by Charles, Duke of Orleans ; ed. G. W. Taylor, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 200.

Allas and lo  
But whi soverayne  
Doon ye thus payne  
Upon me rayne  
Shall y be slayn."

I am inclined to agree with the learned editor of Charles of Orléans' English poems, who says:<sup>1</sup> "The English version has all the spirit of originality, and evinces a masterly knowledge of that language, which would do credit to the native writers cotemporary with the royal French prisoner, from whom, however, no poetic productions have descended to us."

We have now arrived at a royal trouvère, René, Duke of Anjou, Lorraine, and Bar, Count of Provence and Piémont, King of Naples, Sicily, Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> etc. Like his cousin Charles of Orléans he also was for many years a prisoner; like him, too, he sang chiefly of the pleasures of love and the beauties of nature; and like him, too, he neglected too much his princely duties to occupy himself, when returned from prison, with his curiosities, his painters, and his poets at his castle of Tarascon. And yet he was not such a drivelling old fool as Sir Walter Scott has sketched him,<sup>3</sup> nor such a great hero as two of his French biographers<sup>4</sup> wish to make him out. His daughter, Margaret of Anjou, the wife of Henry VI. of England, appears to have accapitated the spirit which ought to have belonged to her father, who only wished for peace and quietness, and piecemeal abandoned all his estates in order to secure the, to him, priceless boon. He is said to have been an artist. He has also written several devotional and allegorical works in prose and in verse, some tales, a book on tournaments, and a great many short poetical pieces, which bear the impress of a certain true admiration

<sup>1</sup> *Poems written in English*, by Charles, Duke of Orleans; ed. G. W. Taylor, Introduction, p. iv.      <sup>2</sup> 1409-1480.      <sup>3</sup> *Anne of Geierstein*.

<sup>4</sup> MM. de Villeneuve-Bargemont and de Quatrebarbes.



for the beauties of nature, and a peculiar artlessness of style, not without its charm. We shall give only one example of his descriptive power. In *Regnault et Jehanneton* he describes his own wanderings with his second wife, Jeanne de Laval, along the shores of the Durance, "about the middle of April, when Spring makes already leaf and flower to bud." All kinds of birds sing a hymn in praise of love, the balmy air resounds with their varied song; they fly in couples under the thick foliage, or along the flowery hedges to choose there where to build their nests; the larks mount upwards carolling in the sky; the bees and butterflies flutter from flower to flower; the whispering groves, the murmuring brooks, the wavy meadows, the echoes of the woods and valleys, repeat songs of love; the shepherds and shepherdesses begin to play, when a pilgrim appears on the scene. He sees the shepherdess Jehanneton and the shepherd Regnault at breakfast, and this meal is described as follows in very tripping verselets:—

"The shepherd then made her a present,  
 Without any more delay,  
 Of a little barrel  
 Full of wine, and of a pretty  
 Little nice well-looking knife,  
 And of a net, with meshes  
 Made of hemp. . .  
 To speech was given respite.  
 They beginning with good appetite  
 To eat, and all came out  
 Of a small basket:  
 First a little napkin,  
 Some garlic, also a ham,  
 And a small soft cheese,  
 Some shalots,  
 Some salt, and also some **nuts**,  
 And plenty of wild apples,  
 Salad roots and lettuces,  
 Champignons.

Thin wine and onions,  
 Also two saucers of wood,  
 And of earthenware two bottles;  
 And the cup  
 Was of a new bark  
 Of oak, which the shepherdess,  
 As a thing pretty and beautiful,  
 Much valued;  
 Some milk was kept in it.  
 Then I saw the shepherd, who took  
 Some wood and put fire to it;  
 And Jeanneton  
 Placed upon it the little kettle;  
 Then Regnault came near  
 And supported it with a stick,  
 That it should not fall." <sup>1</sup>

Is this not a very nice rural breakfast? Onions and shalots may not suit northern palates; there may also not be enough substantial viands for them, but we are in the sunny south, the land of song and garlic, where the heart thirsts for poetry and love, and the palate for alliaceous condiments. The

<sup>1</sup> We give the following lines as a sample of René of Anjou's style:—

" Le pasteur si lui fist présent,	Des responses et des herbetes,
Sans plus tarder lors à présent,	Des champignons,
D'un barillet	Du vin aigre et des oignons,
Plain de vin et d'un joliet,	Aussi de boys deux sauserons,
Petit, constant, gent coustelet,	Et de terre deux goderons;
Et d'une pannetière à plet	Et l'escuelle.
Faicte de teille . . .	Estoit d'une escorcee nouvelle
Au parier fut donné respit.	De chaine, que la pastourelle,
Eux prenant de bon appétit	Pour une chose gente et belle,
A manger, par quoy tout sortit	Bien la tenoit,
Du panneron :	Qui du lait gardé l'y avoit,
Premier ung petit tonailon,	Puis vy le pasteur qui prenoit
Des aillez, aussi ung jambon	Du boys, et le feu y mectoit;
Et ung petit moult fromageon,	Et Jauneton.
Des eschalletes,	Mectoit dessus le palleron
Du sel et aussi des noisetes,	Puis Regnault vint à l'environ
Et foison sauvages pommestes,	Qui le soustenoit d'un baston,
	Qu'il ne tombast."

pilgrim continues to listen, and sees the shepherdess show to her shepherd a pair of loving turtledoves, which she upholds as a model of fidelity. Then a quarrel ensues about the relative faithfulness of lovers, and at last they perceive the pilgrim and beg him to be their judge. He puts off his sentence to the next morning, and goes away to say his prayers at the little chapel in the wood, where

“The nice little joyful birds,  
So pleasant, gentle, and loving,  
Ceased their melodious warbling ;  
And here and there each did their best  
To go and sleep in pairs  
Within their very pretty nests,  
And no longer sang their songs.

The quails loudly did raise their voices  
In the meadows, so that they resounded  
In the woods, which were near there ;  
And then the stags rushed out of the forests,  
And came to eat the corn.  
Then more than one did listen,  
And often kept looking around them.

The partridges also uttered their cries,  
And then in covies fled away,  
And came down where the fields are,  
And there stopped all night.  
The bull-flies buzzed through the air ;  
In other parts the coneys were trotting about  
And leaping too at the same time.

The sun was absent,  
And no longer showed there,  
Nor appeared any where,  
Except on the steeple, where what she touched,  
Was made rather dazzling ;  
But scarcely I beheld it,  
For I soon lost sight of it.

The screech-owl coming out of his hole,  
 Was already seated on a tree,  
 Uttering his wretched and harsh note ;  
 And the bat was flying (to look)  
 For the sun which was hiding,  
 And the air was a little more cool,  
 And I felt it at the top of my fingers.”<sup>1</sup>

The pilgrim says his orisons, passes the whole night in prayer, and when he returns to the appointed place next morning, finds the two lovers gone. This is a fair description of the entire pastoral, as perfect as any that exists in the old *fabliaux*, and in which the accurate, minute, and poetical description of landscape is only equalled by the delicate delineation of human feelings, and by the chastity of thoughts. We must, however, admit that now and then some obscure verses, as well as a certain affectation, and some childish play on words, in imitation of the Italian *concetti*, are to be found in it ; but of course René, though a king, did not escape the influence of his age and of the times in which he lived.

The last and greatest of the trio is François Villon. His

<sup>1</sup> We shall only give the first two couplets of the lines we quote, in order to show the difference of metre from the extract given on page 247 :—

“ Et les gents oiseletz joyeux,  
 Plaisans et doux et amoureux,  
 Cessoient leur glay mélodieux ;  
 Et çà et là chascun qui mieulx  
 S' alloient conscher deux et deulx  
 Dedans leurs nix très gracieulx,  
 Ne plus leurs doux chans ne chantoient.

Les cailles leurs voix fort haussioient  
 Es prez, si qu'en retentissoient  
 Les boys qui près de là estoient ;  
 Et les cerfs lors des fors issoient,  
 Et es biez là menager venoient  
 Pour ce que plus aine adonc n'oient  
 Autour d'eulx souvent regardant.



poems are sermons in *dishabille*, moralities in the garb of looseness, history in romance, philosophy in love-songs. His strength and his weakness are precisely the strength and weakness of much of the French light literature of the present day ; and if he inherited these with his nationality, we must not forget that Villon was to some extent the literary progenitor of those who followed him ; and that his special characteristics, the qualities which distinguished him from his contemporaries and his predecessors, have been transmitted to succeeding generations from him as their origin. If he took from his race and from his age, he gave back infinitely more ; it is the privilege and the glory of every vividly original soul ; and it was the privilege of Villon in a more than ordinary degree.

It is true of him, as of Rutebeuf, of Adam de la Halle, of the author of the *Farce de Pathelin*, that we know little of his life beyond what he himself has told us. It was not because he lacked popularity in his own day, but rather because his friends and fellow-countrymen were not given to much writing, and because the generation which immediately followed his own was specially barren of literary activity. Born probably at Paris, in the year 1431, he was of poor parentage, the son of a working man, and of an illiterate mother. He had a taste for reading, and was a graduate of the University of Paris, which was closed in those days by no bar of fortune or birth. He learned there little more than had been learned by Rutebeuf in his day. His nature and true tastes began to display themselves. Less fitted for arduous studies than for a life of pleasure and recklessness, he attained such an eminence amongst his idle companions that they made him their leader in all their madcap enterprises, which included strange and lawless methods of supplying themselves with the means of purchasing their amusements. An awkward circumstance brought this easy though perilous career to an end. He had

been paying court to a beauty who for some time listened favourably to his prayers, but who presently flouted and threw him over. He took revenge with his tongue, perhaps went still farther, and played a few unpleasant practical jokes upon her; whereupon the lady complained to the ecclesiastical authorities; and a graphic picture of the times is brought before our eyes by the fact that the said authorities—perhaps, indeed, the authorities of the university—ordered him to be whipped. Villon underwent his punishment, and then quitted Paris, not, however, without leaving behind him a volume of poems entitled *Lays*, now known as his *Petit Testament*. He was twenty-five years old when this degradation fell upon him, and this, together with his poverty and wretchedness, seemed for a time to destroy every particle of his self-respect. He did not go far from Paris, but hung about the environs in the company of the worst or lowest of both sexes, at one moment steeped to the hair in almost indescribable moral and physical defilement, and the next moment writing witty and even refined poems and ballads. In 1457 we find him in the cells of the Châtelet, condemned to death for some crime or other—not necessarily a very grave one,<sup>1</sup> after any other standard than that of the ruthless laws of the Middle Ages. Of course the trial which preceded the sentence was in itself no trifle, for Villon had undergone “question by water,”<sup>2</sup> long a favourite process in the French courts. The accused was laid out for this examination upon a stretcher, bound thereto with strong cords round his chest, his loins, and his ankles, or else suspended in the air by his four extremities, to each of which was attached a heavy weight. The

<sup>1</sup> According to the latest discovered documents, Villon is said to have been connected with a band of robbers, who even plundered the Collège de Navarre; hence his condemnation.

<sup>2</sup> Such, at least, seems to be the only meaning which we can attach to the following couplet from his *Grand Testament*:—

“ On ne m’eust, parmi ce drapel,  
Fait boyre à celle escorcherie ”

former is the method illustrated in a wood-engraving by Damhoudere, issued at Antwerp just a hundred years after Villon had passed under the ordeal. The executioner then grasped his victim by the nose, until the exhausted lungs forced open his mouth, when, the moment being adroitly seized, some nine litres of water were poured gradually in a continuous stream down the unhappy wretch's throat. Double the quantity of water was employed for the "question extraordinary," and when all was over the (very possibly innocent) man was considerably laid before the fire to dry.<sup>1</sup>

Our poet contrived to escape the capital sentence through the mediation of a prince unnamed, to whom he had cunningly appealed on the day of his daughter's birth. In all probability this friend in need was Charles of Orléans, a sufficiently genuine poet to be beyond the influence of envy. Villon was grateful to his patron, and addressed a copy of verses full of delicate feeling to the infant princess who had so opportunely arrived on the scene. He apostrophises her thus:—

"O honoured birth, sent here below from heaven ;  
 Worthy offshoot of the noble lily ;  
 Most precious gift of Jesus ; Mary, most gracious name,  
 Fount of pity, source of grace,  
 The happy consolation of mine eyes,  
 Who dost build and confirm my peace.  
 The peace, that is, of the rich,  
 The substance of the poor,  
 The hiding-place of felons and wretches."<sup>2</sup>

The double allusion to the Virgin and the princess is most judiciously handled ; and, be it observed, Villon was a genuinely religious man, doubt it who will, though the lion's share of his life was given rather to the cause than the fact of his repentance.

<sup>1</sup> P. Lacroix, *Mœurs, Usages et Costumes au Moyen Age, Pénalité*.

<sup>2</sup> *Oeuvres de Villon*, Jannet, p. 105.

We hear no more of him until 1461, when he turns up at Meung, once more in prison, and this time by order of Bishop Thibault. There he wrote verses for many weary months, it may be for years, cursing at intervals the *folle plaisance* which had led to his sojourn in that dismal hole beneath the moat. Surely he had been more unfortunate or more reckless than ninety-nine out of a hundred of his contemporaries, for his crimes do not appear to have been very heinous in themselves ; or were two imprisonments and a whipping not much more than the average experience of a vagabond of the fifteenth century ? And does our poet owe his evil repute chiefly to his garrulous muse ? It is by no means improbable. At all events this man suffered enough in his lifetime to make of the poet a devil-may-care and thoroughly disreputable scamp, a rebel of any kind whatsoever. It is not for Englishmen to wonder at such a result, for there is the making of a rebel in nearly every one of them, and nothing would do it more readily than hopeless wretchedness and perpetual oppression. But few Englishmen could have sung out their miseries in graceful and spiritual "ballads." That requires a Rutebeuf, a Villon, a Béranger, a Frenchman in fact ; not caring for the morrow, nor much for personal appearances, but with abounding genius and philosophy and lightness of heart. So our poet went on writing as gaily as ever. It is doubtful how long he survived the prison of Meung, which must have sorely tried his constitution, for he had "to drink water many a morning and evening." Rabelais tells us that Villon had made a journey to England, and that in his old age he retired to Saint Maxent in Poitou, under the favour of a wealthy man, abbé of the said place. There, to entertain the people, he took in hand to produce the play of the Passion in the Poitevin manner and language.<sup>1</sup> Let us hope so. If he ended his life respectably and in comfort

<sup>1</sup> *Pantagruel*, Bk. iv. ch. 13.



he may not have written many more songs in the old gay fashion ; but perhaps he had written enough, and old age sings its own mute song of contentment all the better for superfluity of food and warmth and raiment.

It is certain that Villon dabbled in the drama, but all that he has left us of an authentic character is purely lyrical. Of course he was more honoured after his death than before it, and Francis I. encouraged Clément Marot to collect his poems, which was done with a will and with a hearty appreciation. In an octave prefacing this edition, Marot says that if anything is found wrong in it he should be blamed, but that if this edition of Villon is better arranged and more highly valued, thanks should be given for it to the king, "who alone was the cause of the undertaking." The preface of Marot's edition displays editorial instinct of no mean order, but he fell under the lash of the Pléiade for having anything whatever to say to "so miserable a workman" as Villon, and for giving undue importance to "what was worth nothing."

There can be no doubt that Villon, like Byron and a few more of his world-despising sort, blackened his own character out of mere indifference or defiance. We do not for a moment incline to take literally the repulsive word-picture which he draws of himself in *Grosse Margot*, whereof the *envoi* bears its own refutation, or at least its own explanation, on its face.

Reckless, not to say bitter, defiance of the world breathes in too many of his lines. They have maligned, tortured, degraded him : they shall have text for their commentary, and substance for their shadows. But he is not always in this mood. He is fond at times of giving good advice to his old companions, though in giving it he can hardly forbear the final wink of the eye which expresses more than all his words. Read his *Bellade de bonne Doctrine*, which we have not the heart to translate lest it should lose its delicate aroma. Perhaps he is best of all when dealing with "the ladies of Paris,"

or with one or other of the particular ladies on whom he sets his affection for the time being. Turn over the leaves of his works where you will, there are the same overflowing spirits, the same jests and wiles and pranks of wit, the same froth of humour and joyousness; rarely passion of great depth, rarely seriousness of long duration, but just sufficient of each to show that we are in presence of a soul infinitely varied, unstintedly gifted, full of character and human significance, full also of the perplexing inconsistencies and abandonments of genius.

A fair specimen of Villon's pathos, badinage, and grace of treatment combined may be found in this ballad from *Le Grand Testament : Des Dames du Temps Jadis* :—

“ Tell me where or in what land  
Is Flora, the lovely Roman  
Archipiada, or Thaïs,  
Who was her cousin-german?  
Echo, answering when a sound is thrown  
Across the river or over a lake,  
Who had a beauty too far beyond her kind?  
But where are last year's snows?

Where is the most wise Heloïs?  
For whom was mutilated and turned monk  
Pierre Abelard at Saint Denys;  
For his love he had this punishment.  
Where, I ask, is the queen  
Who ordered that Buridan  
Should be cast in a sack into the Seine?  
But where are last year's snows?

The queen, white like a lily,  
Who sang with the voice of a siren,  
Bertha, the big-footed, Beatrix, Alice  
Harembouges, who governed Mayne,  
And Jeanne, the good maiden from Lorraine,  
Whom the English burned at Rouen :

Where are they, Virgin-Queen ?  
But where are last year's snows ?

Prince, you may ask for a week  
Where they are, or for a year,  
Yet shall this refrain endure—  
But where are last year's snows ? ”

He was not the only poet, by many thousands, whose best efforts were put forth in the hour of affliction, and whose favour with posterity has sprung, in no slight degree, from the cruelty of their contemporaries. He saw and foresaw this himself, lying in his prison under sentence of death ;

<sup>1</sup> “ Dietes moy, ou, ne en quel pays  
Est Flora la belle Romaine,  
Archipiada, ne Thais  
Qui fut sa cousine germaine ?  
Echo parlant quand bruyt on maine  
Dessus rivièrè, ou sus estan,  
Qui beaulté eut trop plus que humaine ?  
Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan ?

Ou est la tressage Helois ?  
Pour qui fort chastré (et puy Moyne)  
Pierre Esbaillart à Sainct Denys  
Pour son amour eut cest essoigne.  
Semblablement ou est la Royne  
Qui commanda que Buridan  
Fut jetté en ung sac en Seine ?  
Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan ?

La Royne blanche comme ung lys  
Qui chantoit à voix de Sereine,  
Berthe au grand pied, Biétris, Allya,  
Harembouges qui tint le Mayne,  
Et Jehanne la bonne Lorraine  
Qu' Angloys bruslerent à Rouen.  
Ou sont ilz, Vierge souveraine ?  
Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan ?

Prince n'enquerez de sepmaine  
Ou elles sont, ne de cest an,  
Que ce refrain ne vous remaine :  
Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan ? ”

and he tells us that "trouble has sharpened my clumsy thoughts, round as a skein, teaching me more than all the commentaries in the Ethics of Aristotle." He made a jest of his condemnation, as he had made a jest of his masters, of his parents, of his poverty and wretchedness, writing his own epigram in words which could hardly have come from the tongue of a heinous criminal. Yet, side by side with this jest, comes an outburst of that ever-present pathos which was with him so near akin to jest; a challenge which, it may be, he had given to one of his friends, with the petition that he would affix it to a pillar at the ghastly gibbet of Mont-faucon when he and his companions should be dangling there in chains—food for the vultures, but not for inhuman gibes :—

" O brother men, who after us endure,  
Be not in heart against us hardened;  
For if ye show pity on us poor wretches,  
God will for this have greater mercy on you.  
You see us here suspended, five or six;  
As for the flesh which we had over-nourished,  
It is long since devoured and rotten,  
And we bones are turning to ashes and dust;  
Let no man laugh at our evil case,  
But pray God that he will absolve us all.'

1 " *Frères humains qui après nous vivez  
N'ayez les cœurs contre nous endurcis,  
Car si pitié de nous pauvres avez  
Dieu en aura plustost de vous merciez;  
Vous nous voyez cy attachez, cinq, six;  
Quant de la chair, qui trop avons nourrie,  
Elle est pieça dévorée et pourrie,  
Et nous les os, devenons cendre et pouldre;  
De nostre mal personne ne s'en rie,  
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille absouldre."*





# BOOK III.

## THE RENAISSANCE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### § 1. CAUSES OF THE RENAISSANCE.

LET us for a moment dismiss from our minds the order of the centuries, the succession of dynasties, the political divisions of the world, and, free from interruptions, stand face to face with half-a-dozen facts.

To begin with, let us realise this truth, that heaven, earth, and humanity were discovered within the limits of a lifetime.

Imagine that you exist upon a platform in space, supported you know not how, limited you know not where; that round about you in the firmament of heaven are whirled the sun and moon, the innumerable stars; that somewhere beneath your feet burns the *malcholge* of the wicked, and somewhere above your head stands the paradise of the saints. You have taken all this for granted upon the faith of your father's word; you have had it confirmed from the pulpit and in the lecture room; you have found its sanction in the Bible. You no more think of questioning it than of doubting those other irrefragable facts, that the blood rests in your veins like the wine in a bottle, that the winds blow "where they list," without law or explanation, that every weight falls "downwards," and that to question any of these unquestionable facts would be a grievous offence against the God who made you. And now suppose that you are suddenly made

aware, by incontestable proofs and confirmations, that the belief of your life has been false ; that from your youth upwards you have been living in gross darkness, and accepting "a vain thing fondly imagined." Suppose that a new teacher—a dozen new teachers—arise, who convince you by an altogether novel process of argument, by an appeal to faculties which you had scarcely yet ventured to exercise, and which you now exercise almost against your will, that the world whereon you live is not flat but round, not fixed but moving, and moving with a double motion, round an axis and round a point, moving at a pace which it makes you giddy to contemplate, and which can never be appreciated or illustrated by any process within our mental grasp. Suppose yourself forced to admit that the unquestionableness of these new and stupendous facts is of an entirely different kind from the unquestionableness of your previous faith, no more absolute in its degree, but beyond the reach of uncertainty in its character. Suppose, again, that you are informed of other worlds of men existing on the earth which you had imagined to be parcelled out between yourself and your neighbours, that you speak with travellers who have been there, and who describe to you these new-discovered races—their manners, their appearance, their civilisations ;—and that, in short, you begin to realise how different are the maps of heaven and earth from those which you had been wont to keep before your eyes. And finally, suppose that, contemplating all these, and a score of facts besides—foremost amongst them the discovery of a process by which the copies of a book may be multiplied indefinitely, thus assuring at once the preservation and wider dissemination of sacred and profane knowledge—you are astounded at the grandeur, the richness, the promise of the vista opened before you ; you perceive your duty to God, to the Church, to humanity, in a new light ; you rebel against your former ignorance, and against those to whom you con-

ceive it to have been due. A vast change comes over you, for which you are at a loss to account; but presently the explanation is discovered. You have ceased to be content with deductions from the mind to the senses, but require your mind to interpret your senses. You are no longer before all things a votary of faith, but admit yourself to be a convert of reason.

Enter into the spirit of this contrast between your first and your last condition, perceive the full nature and extent of your advance, and then tell us the result. Is it not a revolution, a reconception, a *renaissance*?

In the sixteenth century men found themselves in this predicament. Columbus had discovered America a few years before the century commenced. Copernicus and Galileo explored the heavens, and hung the revolving world in space. Luther and Calvin liberated the soul, as Rabelais and Montaigne liberated the mind, and as Shakspeare and Cervantes gave wings to the imagination. The art of printing had already reaped its first triumphs, and more than realised the anticipations of its inventors. It had been the principal means of carrying back the attention of the world to classical antiquity, and of restoring the rich treasures of Greek and Latin literature. By this service alone it deserved to rank with the discoveries of the astronomers, and to be compared with the intellectual conquests of the reformers. More than once in the Middle Ages attempts had been made, from the days of Alcuin to the days of Abelard and Occam, to reconquer the lost learning of the world—now through the schoolmen, now by rejection of the schoolmen's barren methods: now through the medium of profane literature, now by the ineffectual aid of religious philosophy; but the effort had failed. "The struggle of the Middle Ages," says a brilliant French historian,<sup>1</sup> "had been continually directed

<sup>1</sup> Michelet, *Renaissance*, Intro.



against a relapse into nature. With partial and temporary successes, they encountered frequent and long rebuffs. The revolution of the sixteenth century, occurring more than a hundred years after the death of the preceding philosophy, found an inconceivable absence of life, a complete blank, and sprang from the loins of nothing. It was the heroic offspring of a vast exercise of will." The art of printing aided it, but slowly and imperfectly; aided it by resuscitation of the ancient intellectual forms, but at the same time obstructed it by the perpetuation of the modern vacuities. "If they published antiquity, yet on the other hand they published the Middle Ages, and above all the class-books, summaries, abstracts, the whole doctrine of folly, the manuals of confessors and the cases of conscience; ten Nyders for one Iliad; with one Virgil a score of Fichets."<sup>1</sup> If the Renaissance could not have been without the discovery of printing, it triumphed almost in spite of it.

## § 2. THE RENAISSANCE IN FRANCE.

The phases of this revolution—or rather, of this new evolution of the human intellect—were many; and its results upon the literary and political progress of France were such that the nation may be said to have passed from childhood to adolescence without the interval of boyhood. The new light which had been admitted into the minds of men, having once pierced the mists and clouds of their ignorance, could never thereafter be extinguished, though there were many who would have thought that by extinguishing it they would

<sup>1</sup> Michelet, *Renaissance*, Introd. Nyder was a famous German theologian who died about 1440, after destroying thousands of Bohemians in a crusade, and several of whose works were reprinted at Paris early in the sixteenth century. His most ridiculous book is called *Formicarium*. Fichet was a theologian, an orator, and rector of the University of Paris in 1467. His letters and treatise on Rhetoric were printed in Paris, 1470-1474.

render God service. The fruit of the forbidden tree had been tasted, and, strange to say, tasted with impunity; for the sword of the Church had no terrors when it was known that the Eden on which men had turned their backs was but a paradise of fools, a garden of sloth and ignorance and superstition. Yet it was more than an unsubstantial sword which was turned against those who had braved the proscription of freedom and knowledge, and who, with the enthusiasm of a lofty rebellion, set themselves to till, with the sweat of their brains, the intellectual ground upon which Church and Parliaments, kings and doctors, had planted the briars and thistles of their curse. Political liberty and power were regarded as the sacred monopoly of a privileged class, waived only on rare occasions in behalf of such as managed to flatter the pride or disarm the prejudices of the ruling minds, and jealously guarded by Parliaments which were themselves subservient to the monarchy and the Church. Liberty of discussion, freedom of tongue and pen, were sternly limited, not only by ecclesiastical despotism, but by the universities themselves, and in particular by the right of censure vested in the Sorbonne. Liberty of belief, of religious inquiry and theological controversy, was repressed by the vast influence and wealth of the Church, which could at need set in motion every political engine in the state; which never hesitated to hurl its anathemas against all who raised the note of scepticism or denial; which had its stake for the recusant, its army of Jesuits for the suspected, its almost equally powerful league for those who ventured to whisper of reform. Royalty, which began by sympathising with the Renaissance and the Reformation, ended by casting in its lot with the champions of darkness; yet selfishly enough, always for its own interest, burning Huguenots in France, but allying itself with Protestants in Germany; combining with the Church against the Huguenots, with the Reformation against the Ligue, crushing one sup-

posed enemy by the aid of another, and escaping for a time, not without difficulty, from the fury of insurrection and from the peril of the assassin.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Renaissance in France had its baptism of blood, and only by a long and cruel struggle attained in the end the right to exist. In England it had less to fear. Henry the Eighth, indeed, would have crushed it by the sheer brutality of a prejudiced mind. Himself a scholar, he would fain have been the only one in his kingdom; hostile to the Church from the desire of an illicit freedom, he was hostile to intellectual progress from the wantonness of a fastidious autocracy. Under his eldest daughter the supremacy of the ecclesiastics was once more established; but their brief fury was directed rather against religious than against intellectual freedom. In England it was the Reformation which had to pass through fire and blood; the Renaissance worked its way almost without obstacle or check. Yet France had her consolation for this agony. Her political and literary triumphs were delayed, but not less sure; and in the end she has been the first to reach the threshold of that complete mental emancipation to which Rabelais and Montaigne almost unconsciously looked forward.

The manifold energy of the Renaissance manifested itself in all its militant vigour and intensity during the sixteenth century. By its resort to the models of antiquity, by its keen-edged and polished satire, by its rehabilitation of philosophy and jurisprudence, by its spirit of scepticism, by its reformation of religion, at least attempted from within the Church, this crisis of intellectual thought in France gave evidence of all the highest faculties and capabilities of the national mind. We must study each phenomenon in its turn before we can hope to realise the power and the achievements of this newly awakened activity

<sup>1</sup> Lenient, *Satire en France*, Introd.

Have we made too much of indirect causes, of impressions, of the influence of discoveries and new facts, in our attempt to place ourselves at the source of the Renaissance in France? Let us hasten to remove the impression, which would undoubtedly be false and incomplete. The action of man upon man is, at all events as a general rule, superior in force to the action of a formula or of a fact. We have said it before; the man's effect upon his generation is distinct from the effect of the generation upon the man, and may, on occasion, be the greater. Was there a man, or were there a group of men, who can take high rank amongst the influences which brought about the French Renaissance? The revelations of science, the discoveries of geographers, the spread of ancient lore by means of the printing press, could sharpen the intellect and excite the imagination; but could they refine the taste and develop the literary style? The study of antiquity undoubtedly could; but hardly so the new facts of physical science. Beyond question there were individual human agencies at work in this grand revival of thought and imagination—agencies which set at nought the boundaries of race, tongue, and nationality, which traversed the Alps from a regenerate Italy, and brought a new Roman conquest into modern Gaul. As Montaigne and Ronsard and Pascal were destined to have their schools of imitation and disciples, so were Petrarch and Boccaccio, the Medici and the Borgias, Lascaris, Leonardo da Vinci, Poggi, Bembo, Politian, amongst the first leaders of the resuscitated intellect of France. For the revolt against the darkness of the Middle Ages began on classical soil; antiquity was renewed in the home of its original glory. Italy had never been so overwhelmed with the grossness of mediæval ignorance as were the countries of western and northern Europe. The Italian poets and romancists of the fourteenth century had handled manuscripts which the monks and ecclesiastics contemptuously left as a prey to the dust and the worm,



or cut up into missals and talismans for women and children. Petrarch himself, not ashamed to draw occasional inspiration from the delicate poetry of Provence, virtually inaugurated the Italian Renaissance, though the Popes Alexander VI. and Leo X. were to foster and bring it to completion by their polished taste and munificent encouragement. In the fifteenth century Italy could boast a crowd of lofty intellects, ripe scholars, and worthy cultivators of the Muses. Machiavelli wrote his immortal treatise on the art of government,<sup>1</sup> and commented on the History of Livy. Cardinal Bembo, the friend and admirer of Lucrezia Borgia, herself a woman of cultivated taste, and the daughter of a Pope, was an elegant scholar and writer, saturated by the classical spirit, as learned and as polished an ecclesiastic as the Gallo-Roman Sidonius. Poggi epitomised in his *Facetie* the wit and cynicism of a life whose severer studies were given to the legacies of classic Rome. It took fifty years for these artists and men of taste—for, in fact, if we except Machiavelli, they were little more—to arouse the eager fancies of the northern nations; but their influence gradually made itself felt, and thus added precisely the necessary complement to the intellectual awakening produced by the circumstances previously referred to.

It was on the last day of 1494 that Charles the Eighth of France, who had thoroughly united the never yet homogeneous country, entered Rome as a conquering invader amidst a gorgeous pageantry of triumph. He showed to the Italians for the first time the superiority in warfare which Cæsar had by brute force impressed upon the barbarous Gaul, refined and elevated into an art. The national genius of the northern race had its victory of revenge over the genius of the south; a victory of the intellect which Frenchmen have always preferred, in their inmost heart, to the coarse supremacy of gunpowder, sinews, and steel. But if Charles

<sup>1</sup> *Il Principe.*

brought a lesson with him, he took a lesson back ; France, united, having conceived and grasped the idea of nationality, had become the most powerful nation of continental Europe. Philippe Pot had said from his place in Parliament—himself being a favoured courtier of Louis the Eleventh—"All power comes from the people ; all power returns to it. And by the people I mean the mass of men ; I do not except a single inhabitant of the kingdom. The people has made the kings, and it is for the people that they reign. The king gone, the power pertains to the State."<sup>1</sup> And, strong in this idea, France had begun to throw itself into the old groove of war and conquest, forasmuch as its kings knew of no better way. But Italy was to instruct her ancient tributary, and to show her the path to victories more glorious and complete than the victory of arms. The human intellect, the mind and spirit of the nation, provided a field of battle whereof the triumphs, no less difficult of attainment, were infinitely more permanent and assured, incalculably more grand, and fraught with better augury for the welfare and the satisfaction of the nation. Of such a kind was the moral of Italian art and literature in the fifteenth century ; and France did not fail to see it and apply it to herself. The country which had yielded to the fascination of the later Roman Empire was docile to learn from regenerate Italy ; and it was but natural that the taste for classical antiquity should be amongst its first evidences of the revival.

The art of printing had not been slow in bringing ancient literary documents within the reach of almost every studious man. It was in 1474 that William Caxton printed his first book. Before the end of that century the Venetian Aldi had produced an edition of Aristotle in Greek. Demosthenes, Plutarch, Livy, Cicero, Tacitus, followed in rapid succession. After the text came the commentaries. Rival printers ran-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Michelet, *Renaissance*, p. 180.

sacked the manuscripts of every age to discover fit subjects wherewith to appeal to an anxious public. Henceforth men began to live in and by antiquity, which absorbed them from the world, and passed through its severe yet congenial discipline the souls that were to react upon future generations by their culture and their originality. To this day the classical source inspires us; and we can imagine the effect produced upon the blank minds of men to whom a whole intellectual world was thus suddenly opened up. They were intoxicated with the unaccustomed draught; they lived again in the brilliant days which had produced so noble a generation; they made themselves fellow-citizens with Cicero and Livy, with Thucydides and Demosthenes; they reproduced the very failings and beliefs of the classical age. Never was there an apter illustration of the fact that the author of a literary document, himself the creation of his own age, becomes from that moment a potent creator of the ages to come. Greece and Rome have conquered more in their death than when they sent out an Alexander and a Cæsar to trample on the liberties of the world.

France had her Medici, her Elizabeth, her guardian and nourisher of learning, in the early days of Francis the First. It is true that he was one of those to whom we have referred as subjecting all things to their political needs, and playing off friend against friend, foe against foe. It is true that he closed the printing-presses in 1535, twenty years after his accession; that he established the censure of the Sorbonne, and made it a capital offence to publish a religious book without its authorisation; that he burned Berquin and Etienne Dolet, and sanctioned the massacre of heretics. Nevertheless he began well, and he did good service to letters. He founded the Collège de France, establishing chairs of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; he emulated Charlemagne by inviting learned foreigners to his court; he encouraged art, and went so far

in the liberal path, condemned and hated by the ecclesiastics, as to direct Clément Marot to edit the poems of Villon. A strange anomaly, whom literature can neither love nor despise; and yet a strangely apposite picture of the century which he ushered in, full of contrasts and contradictions, of chaotic discord and of splendid illumination.

### § 3 BUDAEUS AND HIS FELLOW-WORKERS.

Amongst the distinguished men who shed lustre on the court of Francis the First was Budaeus (Guillaume Budé),<sup>1</sup> the most industrious and noted classical scholar of his age. Born at Paris of wealthy parents, in the same year as his friend and rival Erasmus, he had already gained a great literary reputation before Francis arrived at the throne. Throughout his life he retained the favour and esteem of his versatile and fickle patron, and was the firm promoter and even protector of learning, assisting the king in the encouragement of letters, and withstanding him, if need be, in his retrograde moods. It was to a great extent by his advice that Francis the First determined on founding the Collège de France—originally styled the *Collège des Trois Langues*—which was set on foot in the year 1531, and which contained not only chairs of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, but also professorships of Mathematics, Philosophy, and Medicine. Erasmus was invited from Rotterdam to occupy the position of its first principal; but, though he loved Paris well, and frequently visited it, especially during the residence there of Budé, he declined the proffered honour. The reason which this Voltaire of the sixteenth century, as he has been called, privately alleged for this determination is characteristic. "Of all the birds" he says, "the eagle is the only one which has seemed to the wise

<sup>1</sup> 1467-1540.



folk worthily to represent royalty ; it has neither beauty nor song, but it is carnivorous, a bird of prey, a thief, a devastator, a wrangler, a solitary ; hated of all, the scourge of all, it has immense power of injury, and still more inclination than power." He remembered that the King of France had a beast of prey for his emblem ; and he preferred to live in learned seclusion at Basle, with friends such as the Frobeniuses, with distinguished visitors and correspondents, and amidst literary consolations such as he knew how to find in the composition of works like his *Colloquia*.

Budé's own literary labours were confined to learned exegesis and commentaries. He wrote annotations on the Pandects, applying the acuteness of a philologist and the judgment of an historian to the elucidation of Roman law ; a treatise *De Asse*, upon the varying value of Roman money in successive ages ; and an inestimable contribution to Greek etymological knowledge, the work of a genuine grammarian, his Commentaries on the Greek language. He does not seem to have ever fully mastered the difficulties of French style ; or, at least, he has left us nothing of importance written in French. The general adoption by learned men in the Renaissance period of the Latin language as a medium for the diffusion of their writings was very natural. They must have been comparatively few in that age who mastered the modern foreign tongues ; whilst translations from one to the other were both rare and slowly effected. It would have been useless for a man like Budé, and perhaps even difficult, to write in his native language ; so that for him, and the many scholars situated like him, Latin was almost the only available medium. And, in general, the scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who in fact wrote mainly for each other and for the universities, were constrained to adopt the one language which was common to them all. Budé's influence upon French literature was therefore an indirect one, acting through the

minds of those who, receiving a learned education in their youth, passed by natural preference to the more popular domains of literary activity. It is not difficult to imagine, though it might be hard to estimate precisely, the true and immediate value of such a man in such an age. But a single trait is recorded of him which says more than a dozen suppositions. One day he was informed—in the house from which, during ten years, he was hardly ever known to emerge—that a couple of monks had been thrown into prison for their contumacy in secretly applying themselves to the study of Greek. Budé at once applied to the king, and urged their release. He obtained his request, little thinking of the significance which future ages would perceive in the story of Budé, the scholar, throwing his agis over Rabelais, the satirist.

The fellow-workers and immediate successors of Budé in the cultivation of the classical tongues were many. At the Collège de France we find Vatable, Danès, Toussain, Turnèbe, Lambin; the latter so notoriously circumspect in the work which he undertook, that he has enriched the vocabulary of his native tongue by the hardly-merited prostitution of his name.<sup>1</sup> Better known even than these were Robert and Henri Estienne, father and son, the first a printer of the Holy Scriptures, who, his orthodoxy being suspected, thought it prudent to end his days in Geneva; the latter, author of perhaps the grandest monument of sixteenth century scholarship,<sup>2</sup> and a pamphleteer in French of no mean order. Henri Estienne was as ardent a politician as he was a laborious scholar, and, if a polished Latinist, yet before all things a Frenchman. Catherine de Medici had introduced the worst vices of Italy into France, and had led a fashion which Estienne and his friends could not but regard with disgust and alarm. He

<sup>1</sup> *Lambiner*, to dawdle.

<sup>2</sup> *Thesaurus Græcæ Linguae*, published in 1572, the same year as the St Bartholomew massacres.

wrote then his *Deux dialogues du nouveau Français italianisé*; a bitter, unstinting, terrible satire. It cost him dear; for the ecclesiastical consistory of Geneva, where it was issued, summoned the writer before them, censured him severely, and banished him from communion. The stiff-backed old scholar, fallen upon evil times, would neither bend nor break; but the remainder of his life was a lonely and miserable exile. Harder still was the fate of Etienne Dolet, a student and a scholar, who became a printer at Lyons, and probably owed his license to print to the fact that he had written a Commentary on the Latin language, which he dedicated to Francis the First. Representative of that formidable revolt against tyranny which found in the printing-press its readiest engine of attack—member of that redoubtable school of irony which incessantly hurled its missiles against priests and wrongs from across the frontiers of Switzerland, his bitterest work was *Le Second Enfer*, directed against the abuses of legal administration. He was several times accused of heresy, and became at last involved in a dispute about the merits of Cicero, in which he certainly showed great powers of sarcasm. Thirteen works, either printed or written by Dolet, were condemned to be burned by the Parliament of Paris on the 14th of February 1543. Our printer thereupon fled to Piedmont; but after a short time came back to Lyons, and published a translation into French of two dialogues of Plato. The Faculty of Theology of Paris found that he had badly translated a certain passage of the Greek philosopher, declared him an *athée relaps*, and burned him on the Place Maubert in the capital, together with his books, after having tortured him with great cruelty. Thus perished a young man of thirty-seven years of age, who suffered for that madness of learning, that enthusiasm for the light, which possessed so many of his contemporaries; who paid with his life for having flayed with cutting satire the champions of ignorance and darkness; for having doubts

raised as to his orthodoxy. Read the death-song of this brave and noble soul, and say if the Renaissance had not already set its seal upon the century :—

“ When they shall have either burned or hanged me,  
Put upon the wheel or quartered ;  
What shall be the result ? It will be a dead body !  
Alas ! however, shall they have no remorse  
For putting to death so cruelly  
One who has in nowise done ill ?  
Is a man of so small a value ?  
Is he a fly ? or a worm which deserves  
Without any regard to be destroyed so soon ?  
Is a man so soon shaped and well-informed,  
So soon provided with science and virtue,  
To be thus like a blade of grass or a straw  
Annihilated ? Do they prize so little  
A noble mind ? ” <sup>1</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> “ Quand on m'aura ou bruslé, ou pendu,  
Mis sur la roue et en cartiers fendu ;  
Qu'en sera-t-il ? Ce sera ung corps mort !  
Las ! toutes fois n'auroit-on nul remord  
De fayre ainsi mourir cruellement  
Ung qui en rien n'a forfait nullement ?  
Ung homme est-il de valeur si petite ?  
Est-ce une mouche ? ou un ver qui mérite  
Sans nul esgard si tost estre destruiet ?  
Ung homme est-il si tost faict et instruiet,  
Si tost muny de science et vertu,  
Pour estre ainsy qu'une paille ou festu  
Anéanti ? Faict-on si peu de compte  
D'ung noble esprit ? ” . . .



## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. SATIRE IN THE RENAISSANCE.

WITH free thought comes, in England, stubborn dissent ; in France, light-hearted satire. The antithesis is partial and incomplete, but it is a significant one. Satire is at the root of the French character, an instinct amongst the descendants of the ancient Gauls, who loved to fight and to talk well ; and it requires no evidence to assure us that an overflowing manifestation of *l'esprit narquois* was amongst the immediate and notable effects of the nation's intellectual revolt. The religious rebellion of the sixteenth century produced Protestantism ; the moral rebellion brought defiance of king, parliament, and college. Both alike were put down by fire and sword. With what result ? In England, again, the result was armed insurrection, civil war, an obstinate assertion and vindication of the right to think and worship in any one of a hundred different ways. In France there was bloodshed, it is true, but rather the bloodshed of massacre than of war ; and, in the end, the victory of obscurantism. But in France men had other weapons, and they used them, as we might anticipate, with even greater ultimate effect than sword and powder. They vindicated the rights of thought with the arms of thought ; they crushed the wielders of many legions with a word. Satire was the blade in which they trusted, and their trust was not misplaced. Their judges send them to the stake and the wheel, hang them, draw and quarter them. They sing a song on

their way to the shambles which makes their judges tremble ; for a nation which knows how to use satire knows also how to feel it. The Sorbonne condemns a book, the ecclesiastical tribunals excommunicate its author ; straightway from Savoy, from Spain, from Holland, comes a pamphlet, or a poem, or a single couplet, and the victors become the victims. The anger of authority is visited upon a popular writer, who by some trifling act has overstepped the narrow line prescribed for him. An allusion, a jest, an epithet, so delicately insinuated that it eludes the grasp of a lynx-eyed censorship, damns the reprover for all time.

The Middle Ages had their satire, as we have already found, but it was as nothing to the torrent of raillery, invective, trenchant irony, biting malice, of the sixteenth century. The sister of Francis the First led the way, Marguerite, the well-known Queen of Navarre.<sup>1</sup> In the *Heptaméron* she vents her contemptuous scorn upon husbands, though she was not unmarried ; against monks, though she was an ardent devotee of religion ; against lawyers and doctors, though she was a queen. And her shrewdest satire of all is unconsciously pointed against herself, for she stands revealed to us as a very woman, the rivals for whose favour are God and the Devil, and who affords to neither of these more than a short and coquettish glance. Nevertheless she deserves better of literature than of her lovers, if she had any, for her little kingdom was the refuge of free thought against the persecutions of her brother and his friends. Her own gentleman-in-waiting, Bonaventure Desperriers,<sup>2</sup> the intimate of Marot, was a free-lance after her own heart, light in love and faith, who began by playing soft nothings to his mistress on the lute, and ended by publishing his *Cymbalum Mundi*—a somewhat vague and incomprehensible prose work, and yet a firebrand amongst his enemies. Its

<sup>1</sup> 1492-1549

<sup>2</sup> Died about 1544.

printer was thrown into a dungeon, the impression was seized and burnt; a hundred and fifty years later Bayle could not discover a copy. Etienne Pasquier said that it ought to be cast into the fire with its author; even Henri Estienne called it detestable; but Marguerite of Navarre was delighted at the sensation which her favourite attendant had created. It is difficult for us, in these days, to understand the rage excited by such works as the *Cymbalum Mundi*; but we must remember that to priests and the Sorbonne even the attempt at satire was a crime, and the slightest show of wit at their expense savoured of impious rebellion against heaven. Desperriers was not exempt from the fate of so many of his contemporaries who were made martyrs to the emancipation of human thought. He was hunted to death; and, it is said, took his own life in a fit of despair and despondency.

Clément Marot,<sup>1</sup> *valet de chambre* of Francis the First, is another Frenchman of this century whose name must appear on more than one page of his country's literary history. He, too, was a satirist of a trenchant character; he, too, paid with his life the penalty of his liberty, dying a miserable and persecuted exile. In his life, his character, his genius, he is a type of the age in which he lived. At once a pedant and a vagabond, a scholar and a merry-andrew, a man of letters and an *enfant sans souci*, ennobled by education and degraded by the very intoxication of knowledge, unable to preserve his balance under the burden of a thousand new ideas, now adding lustre to learning, now trailing the dignity of authorship in the mire, Clément Marot was one of those *enfants terribles* of his day, who it may be confessed, did much to justify the restrictions imposed upon the cultivators of literature. His poems are as varied as were his personal moods. He edited Villor, and modernised Jean de Meung; he versified two *Colloquia* of Erasmus and the parable of the Good Shepherd; he trans-

<sup>1</sup> 1495-1544.

lated the *Penitential Psalms* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; he wrote the praises of Saint Christina and sang the triumphs of Cupid; he composed innumerable rondeaux, ballads, songs, epigrams, epistles in verse. His translated psalms, which he dedicated to Francis the First and to the ladies of France, "soon eclipsed the brilliancy of his madrigals and sonnets. Not suspecting how prejudicial the predominant rage of psalm-singing might prove to the ancient religion of Europe, the Catholics themselves adopted these sacred songs as serious ballads, and as a more rational specimen of domestic merriment. They were the common accompaniments of the fiddle. They were sold so rapidly that the printers could not supply the public with copies. In the festive and splendid court of Francis the First, of a sudden nothing was heard but the psalms of Clément Marot. By each of the royal family and the principal nobility of the court a psalm was chosen and fitted to the ballad tune which each liked best. The Dauphin, Prince Henry, who delighted in hunting, was fond of *Ainsi qu'on oit le cerf bruir*, or *Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks*, which he constantly sang in going out to the chase. Madame de Valentinois . . . took *Du fond de ma pensée*, or, *From the depth of my heart, O Lord*. The queen's favourite was, *Ne renuilles pas, O Sire*, that is, *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine indignation*, which she sang to a fashionable jig (tune). Antony, King of Navarre, sang, *Revenge moy, prens la querelle*, or *Stand up, O Lord, to revenge my quarrel*, to the air of a dance of Poitou. It was on very different principles that psalmody flourished in the gloomy court of Cromwell. This fashion does not seem in the least to have diminished the gaiety and good humour of the court of Francis."<sup>1</sup>

Clément Marot, like Thibaut of Champagne, to whom indeed he bore a certain literary resemblance, aspired sufficiently high in his rhymes and in his acts, for it is rumoured

<sup>1</sup> Warton, *History of English Poetry*, vol. iv. § 45, pp. 125, 126.



that Diana of Poitiers was his Blanche of Castile. If this be true she proved by far the most perilous object of devotion, and if the foolhardy poet met her scorn by satire, the king's mistress found a weapon more powerful still. Marot was accused of a terrible crime—the eating of bacon in Lent; and imprisonment—not the first—followed as a matter of course. Straightway he poured forth a flood of rhyme. He wrote to Bouchart, the inquisitor, protesting his orthodoxy: “I am neither a Lutheran, a Zwinglian, nor even an Anabaptist . . . but, in short, I am one who believes, honours, and values the holy, true, and Catholic Church.” He addressed the fable of *The Lion and the Rat* to his friend Lyon Jamet, entreating him to use his influence to get him out of prison; and, at the same time he could not refrain from the very crime of satire which caused all his troubles. He wrote an offensive ballad concerning Diana of Poitiers,<sup>1</sup>—at least so it was said—and even went so far as to lampoon his judges. When the king returned to Paris he was liberated; but he had made too many enemies to be comfortable in France. All whom he had ever railed at were bent on his destruction; and a great many persons of influence were included in the number. At all events an anonymous copy of verses, *Adieux aux Dames de Paris*, was laid to his charge,<sup>2</sup> and it was said that none could hold herself safe from the author's bitter jests. Marot declared that he had

<sup>1</sup> One stanza follows:—

“ Un jour j'écrivis à ma mie  
Son injustice seulement,  
Mais elle ne fut endormie  
A me le rendre chaudement.  
Car dès l'heure tint parlement  
A je ne sais quel papelard,  
Et lui dit tout bellement :  
' Prenez-le, il a mangé le lard.' ”

<sup>2</sup> “ Adieu Paris, la bonne ville,  
Adieu de Meaux la Jeanneton,  
Adieu Lieutenant Civile,  
Adieu la Grive et Caqueton.”

no hand in the production ; and in order to acquit himself of blame, wrote a new satire,<sup>1</sup> hardly less daring than the first, and with one candid line in which he might be held almost to have belied his denial : "A worm, when he is trod upon, bites." Once more the king protected him, but our poet thought it most prudent to flee to Navarre ; and, not allowed to rest even there, crossed the Alps and took refuge in Ferrara. It was during his exile that he wrote to Lyon Jamet his *Trois Epîtres du Coq-à l'Ane* ; nonsense verses of a peculiar light and pliable kind—*vers de société*, in which Marot excelled, and which were specially adapted for the conveyance of satirical allusions. But he soon tired of his banishment ; and, it is said, abjuring Calvinism as he had previously abjured Romanism, he made friends with the Dauphin, patched up a truce with his enemies, and returned to Paris. There he lived quiet for some years, but his petty rivals would not leave him in peace, and Marot found it impossible to be silent under their reproaches. Another outburst of satire followed, in which he contrived to overwhelm the poetasters Sagon, la Huèterie, and the "whole heap of new scribblers." Moreover the Sorbonne declared his translation of the Psalms, which he had only lately brought out—and of which we have already spoken—heretical, and remonstrated with the king for having allowed them to be dedicated to him. Calvin—to his praise be it said—offered the poet an asylum at Geneva ; but Marot preferred to settle in Piedmont, and there he ended his adventurous career.

Marot has perhaps hardly received the attention which he deserves from his own countrymen, although Boileau recommended him as a model of elegant *badinage*. "Much talked of, but seldom read," a French critic<sup>2</sup> says of him. "We do not read with pleasure that which has need of a dictionary to explain it ;"—an unfortunate confession of unfamiliarity with

<sup>1</sup> Epître 46.

<sup>2</sup> Dussault, *Annales littéraires*, vol. i. p. 195.

half of what is sweetest and freshest in literature. "Villon and Marot," says another critic,<sup>1</sup> "and some others are satirical poets; their epigrams may be said to be the only titles they have to celebrity in the present day." And yet Marot has received greater honour out of his own country. Spenser knew and loved his works, and is indeed largely indebted to him in his eclogue of *Pan and Robin* in the "Shepherd's Calendar." It is possible that Marot may have read Chaucer. His *Temple Cupidique* reminds us more than once of the English poet, and its first lines would seem to be a close copy of the opening of the "Canterbury Tales"—

" Sur le printemps que la belle Flora  
 Les champs couverts de diverse fleur a,  
 E son amy Zephyrus les esvente  
 Quand doucement en l'air souspire e vente."

In this allegory Marot represents himself as setting forth on a journey in search of the goddess Ferme-amour; and coming at last to the temple of Cupid he is graciously admitted by Bel-accueil, and approaches the altar of the god. Let one specimen of the simple and flowing verse suffice:—

" The diadem of Cupid  
 Is a chaplet of roses,  
 Which Venus herself gathered  
 In her verdant garden,  
 And in the early spring  
 Sent it to her dear child  
 Who gladly put it on;  
 Then, for these lovely roses, gave  
 To his mother a triumphal car  
 Dragged by a dozen doves.  
 Before the altar two singular cypresses  
 I saw flourishing, breathing forth sweet odours;  
 And they told me those were the pillars

<sup>1</sup> Avenel, in the *Lycee françois*, vol. ii. p. 106,—a literary miscellany published early in the present century.

Of the high altar of lofty Fame.  
 Then a thousand birds from a distant grove  
 Came flying upon this green canopy,  
 Ready to sing divine songs.  
 So I asked why they had come there :  
 But they said to me, Friend, these are the matins  
 Which they have come to sing in honour of Venus."<sup>1</sup>

## § 2. RABELAIS.

We have now come to Rabelais,<sup>2</sup> the greatest satirist of the age, perhaps the greatest satirist of France, whose death occurred midway in the sixteenth century, and around whom all the lesser satirists revolve in ever-widening orbits. A monk to begin with, a voracious scholar and indefatigable thinker, who, probably about 1523, had been rescued by Budé from the punishment attending his persistent and illicit study of Greek, his fame rests not upon ecclesiastical labours or

<sup>1</sup> " De Cupidon le diademe  
 Est de roses un chapelet,  
 Que Venus enellit elle même  
 Dedans son jardin verdelet,  
 Et sur le printemps nouvelet  
 Le transmet à son cher enfant  
 Qui de bon cœur le va coiffant ;  
 Puis donna pour ces roses belles  
 A sa mère un char triomphant  
 Conduit par douze colombelles.  
 Devant l'autel deux cygnes singuliers  
 Je vey fleurir sous odeur embasmée :  
 Et me dit-on que c'estoient les pilliers  
 Du grand autel de haute renommée.  
 Lors mille oiseaux d'une longue rainée  
 Viendront voler sur ces vertes courtines,  
 Prestz de chanter chascunettes divines.  
 Si demanday pourquoi là sont venus :  
 Mais on me dit, ami, ce sont matines,  
 Qu'ilz viennent dire en l'honneur de Venus.

<sup>2</sup> 1493-1553.



classical scholarship, but upon the rough coarse humour and unmerciful satire of a couple of works in which he lashed his age and his profession. He lived scarcely long enough after the appearance of the last part of *Pantagruel* to experience the persecutions which had fallen so heavily upon the heads of his contemporaries ; and, moreover, he was not a man to court reproof and repression, like Marot. Let it be well understood, Rabelais was in his writings a buffoon, a licentious jester, despising and outraging the proprieties, railing at religion and mocking at decency, coarse though never prurient ; but in his private life he was—there is at least nothing to the contrary—a respectable and outwardly moral man, a consistent Catholic, who preserved the respect of his superiors. Entering the monastic life as a Franciscan, he transferred his allegiance under a bull of Pope Clement VII. to the Benedictines. Dissatisfied with his vocation, he took a degree in medicine, and apparently practised for some time as a physician ; then, reverting to his first choice, he was restored by Paul III. to the order of St. Benedict. Once more wearying of the cowl, he obtained the vicarage of Meudon, near Paris, and occupied it until his death. This is no doubt the career of a restless man, but not of an open or imprudent railer ; and it is the career of one who had influence in the highest quarters, and who was careful not to throw it away. His *Gargantua* and the three first parts of *Pantagruel* were issued under an assumed name,<sup>1</sup> so that there was at all events no personal scandal beyond the ranks of the learned. And yet all this put together is not sufficient to account for the comparative leniency with which the most monstrous attack on Church, schools, and civil authority was treated, and even regarded, by so intolerant a censorship.

There was, in fact, a saving clause. Rabelais is intensely,

<sup>1</sup> Not, however, concealed by more than an anagram. His *nom de plume* was Alcofribas Nasier.

villainously, obtrusively coarse. Strange fact, but none the less true, that this very coarseness of humour and illustration obtained for him his immunity from persecution, and secured for his bitter flagellations a currency which the most refined and decorous wit, the most polished scholarship, would never have gained for them. It was, indeed, the polish and the scholarship of Marot, Estienne, and Dolet, which made their invectives so formidable to the Church, which attracted the attention and drew down the anger of the Sorbonne. Their pamphlets and poems were addressed directly to men of culture and keen perceptions, and glanced off at once towards those whose culture and perception made them specially vulnerable to such modes of attack. Rabelais, on the other hand, addressed himself ostensibly to the vulgar, or say rather to such as preferred coarseness to polish and a laugh to a stab. His were essentially funny stories, not bitter poems or scathing pamphlets. So at least the ecclesiastics must have thought, and so, no doubt, Rabelais intended them to think. In addition, he chose an archaic style of writing, and not improbably circulated his works with discretion. He certainly maintained his incognito as long as he could, and he no less certainly relied on the staunchness of his powerful friends; yet, multiply as we may the explanations of his remarkable immunity, we come back to the one strong reason after all. His bitterness was concealed and made palatable by his coarseness, and that coarseness was his best protector.

Of course our satirist had his enemies and his persecutors. In the monastery, above all, he had to run the gauntlet of the hatred and petty persecutions always reserved for a monk who dared to divest himself of the detestable monkish jargon which they called Latin. He and his friend Pierre Lamy were more than once subjected to annoyance, and even to personal discipline of no trifling sort, for the persistence of their attachment to the newfangled studies. The learned

Budé conceived a great friendship for the ingenuous young monks who thus bravely followed his exhortations, and it is said that a regular correspondence was kept up between them. The troubles of Rabelais amongst his fellow-monastics no doubt influenced him in passing from one order to another, and in finally quitting the cloister altogether. It would have been utterly impossible that he should have wholly escaped persecution, but he did escape it in its worst forms, owing to more than one powerful patron his deliverance from more than one imminent danger. Amongst his friends was Geoffroy d'Estissac, bishop of Maillezais, who made him a canon of his abbey, and André Tiraqueau, one of the earliest "teetotallers," "that good, learned, wise, humane, and just civilian," as Rabelais styles him.<sup>1</sup> But even these protectors, coupled with his own discretion, were not sufficient to hold him safe against the fury of the ecclesiastics of the Sorbonne. *Gargantua* was published in 1533, but only an outline of what it afterwards became. Two years later, Francis the First, then at the height of his reactionary folly, and completely (for the time) under the thumb of the Church, is said to have signed a decree for the suppression of printing.<sup>2</sup> It was a terrible and irresistible storm for all who, like Rabelais, had espoused the vocation of letters and literature, and he fled before it. He went to Rome, where he had been before, and where he had also an influential friend in the person of the Cardinal, Jean du Bellay, whose cousin Joachim was a person of considerable merit—so much so, indeed, that he has earned the title of "the French Ovid." An improved edition of *Gargantua* and the two first books of *Pantagruel* had already been published, when the third book of the last work made its appearance in the year 1545, but with a privilege of the king. The Sor-

<sup>1</sup> *Pantagruel*, Book iv., prologue.

<sup>2</sup> No administrative record contains a mention of this piece of almost incredible infatuation, and it is probable that it was never attempted to be fully carried into effect, for the insuppressible cannot be suppressed.

bonnists and the whole clique of zealots were enraged against the author, and, it must be admitted, not without excuse, for Raminagrobis, one of the characters in this third book, speaks thus of the priests :—

“I have this same very day, which is the last both of May and of me, with a great deal of labour, toil, and difficulty, chased out of my house a rabble of filthy, unclean, and pestilential black beasts, dusk, dun, white, ash-coloured, speckled, whose obtrusive importunity would not permit me to die at my own ease ; for by fraudulent pricklings, harpy-like graspings, waspish stings, all forged in the shops of I know not what kind of insatiabilities, they called me out of those sweet thoughts wherein I was acquiescing.”<sup>1</sup>

Panurge says—

“I dare pawn my credit on it that no Jacobin, Cordelier, Carmelite, Capuchin, Theatin, or Minim will bestow his personal presence at his interment. The wiser they, because he has ordained nothing for them in his last will and testament. The devil take me if I go thither. If he be damned, to his own loss and hindrance be it. Why did he abuse the good religious fathers ? Why did he drive them out of his chamber at the very time when he stood in the greatest need of their aid, of their devout prayers, of their holy admonitions ! Why did he not by testament leave them at least some crumbs, something to eat . . . to these poor folks, who have nothing but their life in this world ?”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pantagruel*, iii. ch. xxi. “J’ai ce jourd’hui, qui est le dernier de mai et de moi, hors de ma maison, à grande fatigue et difficulté, chassé un tas de villaines, immundes, et pestilentes bestes noires, guarres, faulves, blanches, cendrées, grivoises, lesquelles laisser ne me voulaient à mon aise mourir, et par frambillantes pointures, harpyements harpyesques, importunités freloniques, toutes forgées en l’officine de ne-sçait quelle insatiabilité.”

<sup>2</sup> *Pantagruel*, iii. ch. xviii. “Je gage que par mesme double à son enterrement n’assistera jacobin, cordelier, carme, capucin, ne minime. Et ceulx sages. Aussi bien ne leur a il rien ordonné par testament. Le diable n’enporte si j’y vai. S’il est damné à son due. Pourquoi mesdisoit il des bons pères de religion ? Pourquoi les avoit il chassés hors sa chambre pas, l’heure qu’il avoit plus besoin de leur aide, de leurs dévotes prières, de leurs saintes admonitions ? Pourquoi par testament ne leur ordonnoit il au moins quelques livres, quelque soulage . . . aux pauvres gens, qui n’ont que leur vie en ce monde.”



Such unstinting applications of the lash were not likely to be borne with equanimity ; and if the wavering king had not stepped forward in defence of the author, his enemies would most likely have burned him.

The characteristic virtues and vices of the Renaissance are conspicuous throughout the works of Rabelais. The intoxication of the newly-revived classical learning, the moral revolution in the Church, the outburst of free thought, free speech, free action, the overcrowding of new ideas, and the dazzling splendour of new facts, all are present in the writings of this genial monk. Hear his pæan of triumph as he casts his mind over the luxuriant richness of the century in which it has pleased God to cast his lot :—

“Now it is that the learned languages are to their pristine purity restored, viz. Greek, without which a man may be ashamed to account himself a scholar, Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldæan, and Latin. Printing likewise is now in use, so elegant and so correct, which has been found out in my time by divine inspiration, as, by a diabolical suggestion on the other side, was the invention of ordnance. All the world is full of learned men, of most learned schoolmasters, and vast libraries ; and it appears to me, that neither in Plato’s time, nor Cicero’s, nor Papinian’s, was there ever such conveniency for studying, as we see at this day there is. Nor must any adventurer henceforward come in public, or present himself in company, that has not been pretty well polished in the shop of Minerva. I see robbers, hangmen, adventurers, ostlers, more learned now than the doctors and preachers were in my time. What shall I say ? The very women and maidens have aspired to this praise and celestial manna of good learning. Yet so it is, that at the age I am now of, I have been constrained to learn the Greek tongue, which I contemned not like Cato, but had not the leisure in my younger years to attend the study of it. And I take much delight in the reading of Plutarch’s *Morals*, the pleasant *Dialogues* of Plato, the *Monuments* of Pausanias, and the *Antiquities* of Athenæus.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pantagruel*, book ii. ch. viii.

No wonder if, in the face of such achievements and such a promise, he raged against the backward-looking ecclesiastics who obstinately remained in their grooves of mediævalism and scholasticism.

The brief examples we have given will suffice to illustrate the style of Rabelais—a style which, as an eminent French critic<sup>1</sup> has remarked, is worthy of a profound study. There can be no doubt that our author prided himself on it; although we incline to the belief that he clung to his archaisms in part for the purpose of concealment, and in order to give his work the appearance of being written for a popular or ignorant audience. At the same time he seems to have designed that his very peculiarities of manner should be a protest against, and a satire of, the pedantic jargon so common in his day, and which he so cordially hated. He has admirably expressed this feeling by the mouth of a priggish young scholar at the “*alme inclyte and celebrate academy, which is vocitated Lutetia,*” and who in answer to Pantagruel’s question how they spend their time, replies: “We transfretate the Sequane at the dilucul and crepuscul: we deambulate by the compites and quadrives of the urb; we despumate the Latin verbocination; and, like verysimilary amorabons, we captat the benevolence of the omnijugal, omniform, and omnigenal fœminine sex. . . . Then do we cauposinate in the meritory taberns of the Pineapple, the Castle, the Magdalene, and the Mule, goodly vervecine spatules perforaminated with petrocile.”<sup>2</sup>

Rabelais’ learning, his sound judgment on all questions of education, his zeal for the methods and theories which had commended themselves to his mind, are, next to his wit and raillery, the most prominent features of his work. In the training of the young Gargantua he has the same opportunity which J. J. Rousseau made for himself in *Emile*; and he uses it

<sup>1</sup> Sainte Beuve.

<sup>2</sup> *Pantagruel*, book ii. ch. vi.

effectively. In his admirable chapters on the education of Gargantua, he unfolds to us his own simple and rational plans for the development of a human being from the uncorrupted elements of humanity. The mind and the body are cultivated side by side, without preference, check, or forcing; the faculties and instincts of the child and the youth are allowed free play; the moral and physical qualities are expanded by a healthy and well-directed exercise. No hour of the day was sacrificed to idleness; for no hour of the day was without its due provision of recreation, of relaxation, or of appointed study. The weakness of Rousseau's system—for it is impossible to give to the whole of his well-considered plan of education the assent and commendation due to the greater portion of it—is that he would leave too much to the chapter of accidents during the earlier years of childhood, forbidding any attempt to mould or train the mind until a certain age has been attained. Rabelais has not thus delayed the application of his rules and methods. Read the account which he gives of one day's occupations, and say whether this liberal-minded monk of the sixteenth century had not worthily and wisely addressed himself to the elaboration of his system.

Gargantua<sup>1</sup> awaked then about four o'clock in the morning. Whilst they were rubbing of him, there was read unto him some chapter of the Holy Scripture aloud and clearly. . . . According to the purpose and argument of that lesson, he oftentimes set himself to worship, adore, pray, and send up his supplications to that good God, whose word did show his majesty and marvellous judgment. . . . This done he was apparelled, combed, curled, trimmed, and perfumed, during which time they repeated to him the lessons of the day before. He himself said them by heart, and upon this would ground some practical cases concerning the estate of man. . . . Then for three good hours he had a lecture read unto him. This done they went forth, still confer-

<sup>1</sup> *Gargantua*, book i. ch. xxiii.

ring of the substance of the lecture, either to a tennis-court, or thereabout, where they played at the ball, the long-tennis, and at the pile trigone, most gallantly exercising their bodies, as formerly they had done their minds. . . . Then . . . walking soberly, went to see if dinner was ready. . . . At the beginning of the meal, there was read some pleasant history of the warlike actions of former times, until he had taken a glass of wine. Then, if they thought good, they continued reading, or began to discourse merrily together . . . of all that was served at that table. . . . Afterwards they conferred of the lessons read in the morning . . . He washed his hands and eyes with fair fresh water, and gave thanks unto God in some fine canticks, made in praise of the divine bounty and munificence. This done, they brought in cards, not to play, but to learn a thousand pretty tricks, and new inventions, which were all grounded upon arithmetic. . . . After this they recreated themselves with singing musically . . . then betook himself to his principal study for three hours together, or more, as well as repeat his matutinal lectures, as to proceed in the book wherein he was, as also to write handsomely, to draw and form the antique and Roman letters. This being done, they went out of their house, and with them a young gentleman of Couraine, named the Esquire Gymnast, who taught him the art of riding. Changing then his clothes, he rode a Naples courser, Dutch roussin, a Spanish jennet, a barbed or trapped steed, then a light fleet horse, unto whom he gave a hundred carieres. . . . There he . . . with a sharp, stiff, strong, and well-steeled lance, would he usually force up a door, pierce a harness, beat down a tree, carry away the ring, lift up a cuirassier saddle, with the mail-coat and gauntlet. All this he did in complete arms from head to foot. . . . Another day he exercised the battle-axe . . . then tossed he the pike, played with the two-handed sword, with the back-sword. . . . He wrestled, ran, jumped . . . he did swim in deep waters . . . dragging along his cloak with his teeth . . . then with the help of one hand he entered forcibly into a boat . . . governed it, led it swiftly or slowly with the stream and against the stream. . . . Coming out of the water, he ran furiously up against a hill . . . climbed up trees. . . . The time being thus bestowed, and himself rubbed, cleansed, wiped, and refreshed



with other clothes, he returned fair and softly. . . . Being come to their lodging, whilst supper was making ready, they repeated certain passages of that which had been read, and then sat down at table . . . the dinner was sober and thrifty. . . . During that repast was continued the lesson read at dinner as long as they thought good: the rest was spent in good discourse, learned and profitable. After that they had given thanks, he set himself to sing vocally, and play upon harmonious instruments, or otherwise passed his time at some pretty sports. . . . On other nights they would go make visits unto learned men, or to such as had been travellers in strange and remote countries. When it was full night, before they retired themselves, they went unto the most open place of the house to see the face of the sky, and there beheld the comets, if any were. . . . Then with his master did he briefly recapitulate, after the manner of the Pythagoreans, that which he had read, seen, learned, done, and understood in the whole course of that day. Then prayed they unto God the Creator . . . and, giving thanks unto him for the time that was past, they recommended themselves to his divine clemency for the future. . . . Which being done, they went to bed, and betook themselves to their repose and rest."

Have we much improved, since Rabelais' time, upon his system of education?

In philosophy Rabelais was a Platonist; rather, perhaps, a disciple at first hand of Socrates, for whom he had an immense appreciation, and whom he frankly confesses to be his model. In the prologue to *Gargantua* he justifies his own work by reference to this great exemplar; and the passage must not be overlooked by such as would comprehend the spirit of one who was, to tell the truth, the Socrates of the French Renaissance: "To have eyed his (Socrates') outside, and esteemed of him by his exterior appearance, you would not have given the beard of an onion for him, so deformed he was in body, and ridiculous in his gesture . . . always laughing, tipping, and merry, carousing with every one, with continual gibes and jeers, the better by those means to conceal

his divine knowledge. Now, opening this box, you would have found within it a heavenly and estimable drug, a more than human understanding, an admirable virtue, matchless learning, invincible courage, inimitable sobriety, certain contentment of mind, perfect assurance, and an incredible regard of all that for which men commonly do so much watch, run, sail, fight, travel, toil, and turmoil themselves." He then goes on to say that some "jolly fools of ease and leisure" may think that there is nothing in *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* "but jests, mockeries, lascivious discourse, and recreative lies;" but open the book and "you shall find that it containeth things of far higher value than the box did promise; that is to say, that the subject thereof is not so foolish, as by the title at the first sight it would appear to be."

Undoubtedly Rabelais was justified in his comparison. Between Greek and Gallic mockery, raillery, buffoonery, there is a distinction and a difference; yet if Socrates evolved the philosophy of the first, Rabelais was his counterpart, under other circumstances and conditions, in the last. There are indeed many points of resemblance between the two men; and if Socrates had been made known to us by his own pen, or if Rabelais had been given to posterity by one of the staidest of his disciples, the likeness might have been incalculably closer. All due allowance made for the diverse manners and habits of their respective epochs, it would be easy to draw a very striking parallel between the old man who so shrewdly, and with so much dry humour, catechised his friends and pupils in the streets and courtyards of Athens, and the wise yet light-hearted French ecclesiastic who gibed and mocked at his audience, present to him only by anticipation, from the cells of his cloister or the retirement of his vicarage. Both knew the priceless value of the ideas which teemed in their own minds, yet neither held it a sacred duty to penetrate himself with a sense of his own dignity, to pro-

claim himself to his fellow-creatures as an oracle or a priest, to impress himself upon posterity as a man worthy of supreme honour and respect. In nothing were they more alike than this, that, for the very philosophy that was in them, they trampled on the respect which their fellow-men might be disposed to pay them. "If you respect me," they would give us to understand, with a coarse joke, a self-debasing gesture, or a ridiculous grin, "you respect my wisdom through me—that is to say, you treat it with disrespect. What I teach you is wise; what I am is a buffoon;—discriminate!" And posterity has understood them, even more fully than their actual disciples.

Socrates was hated and hunted to death by rival philosophers. If Rabelais escaped the full rage of his enemies, can we wonder that they at least pursued him with their hostility to the end? He had mocked not merely the owls and bats of his age, not merely the wolves and vultures and furred law-cats<sup>1</sup> who preyed on the innocent, but also the peacocks and popinjays of the new culture. The "Limousin who counterfeited the French tongue," who reveres "the olympicols," "who doth highly Pindarize," was none the less laughable in his parade of style and learning than the Sorbonne and the judges were hateful in their oppression. And this same Limousin—we cannot doubt it—was one of the earliest of French *précieux*, a member of the Pléiade, a disciple of Ronsard, perhaps the great man himself. Rabelais has no patience with "these fools" who set themselves to forge a "diabolic tongue:" "Thou flayest the Latin . . . I will teach thee to speak," he cries. But his raillery against the popinjays is kindness itself compared to the bitter gibes which he levels against the veritable enemies of humanity. How he hates "the *procultoux*, and the *chicanoux*, the gentry hidden in

<sup>1</sup> *Chats fourrés*, so called, because the judges of the court established to try the Protestants wore furred gowns.

hair, sheriffs and attorneys, who earn their living in a passing strange way, differing by the whole width of heaven from the dwellers of Rome. At Rome men without number get their bread by poisoning, fighting, slaying; the *chicanour* get it by being beaten." And what a revenge he can take upon those for whom he has no mercy; as, for instance, on the murderers of his friend Etienne Dolet, the harsh and pitiless judges who are only too eager to fulfil the cruel behests of Church, Parliaments, or Sorbonne. Listen to his description of the Furred Law-cats, who sell their justice to the highest bidder, and feed like vampires on the blood of their fellow-men:—

"The Furred Law-cats are most terrible and dreadful monsters, that devour little children, and feed on marble tables. . . . The hair of their hides does not lie outwards; and every mother's son of them for his device wears a gaping pouch, but not all in the same manner. . . . They have claws so very strong, long, and sharp, that nothing can get from them what is once fast between their clutches. . . . As we entered their den, said a common mumper, to whom we had given half a teston, Worshipful culprits, God send you a good deliverance. Examine well, said he, the countenance of these stout props and pillars of this catch-coin law and iniquity; and pray observe, that if you still live but six olympiads, and the age of two dogs more, you will see these Furred Law-cats lords of all Europe, and in peaceful possession of all the estates and dominions belonging to it. . . . Among them reigns the sixth essence; by the means of which they gripe all, devour all . . . burn all, draw all, hang all, quarter all, behead all, murder all, imprison all, waste all, and ruin all, without the least notice of right or wrong; for among them vice is called virtue; wickedness, piety; treason, loyalty; robbery, justice. Plunder is their motto, and, when acted by them, is approved by all men, except the heretics: and all this they do, because they dare; their authority is sovereign and irrefragable. . . . If ever plague, famine, war, fire, earthquakes, inundations, or other judgments befall the world, do not attribute them to the aspects and conjunctions of the malevolent planets, to the abuses of the court of Romania, or the tyranny of



secular kings and princes ; to the impostures of the false zealots of the cowl, heretical bigots, false prophets, and broachers of sects ; to the villany of griping usurers, clippers, and coiners ; nor to the ignorance, impudence, and imprudence of physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries . . . but charge them all, wholly and solely, to the inexpressible, incredible, and inestimable wickedness and ruin, which is continually hatched, brewed, and practised in the den or shop of those Furred Law-cats.”<sup>1</sup>

We may safely admit that Swift, when writing *Gulliver*, was not unacquainted with Rabelais.

The spirit of the age, whereof Rabelais was the great exponent, the mental and moral intoxication produced by a sudden access of intellectual light too brilliant to be borne with composure by men so long accustomed to live in the twilight, was destined indeed to be often obscured, but never again extinguished. The stream of free thought and free inquiry, which in the Middle Ages had been dammed up until it burst the dykes on either side, and inundated the whole field of human intelligence in western Europe, passed downwards from year to year, and from generation to generation ; dividing itself, in France at least, into two minor streams. The division was manifest even in the mind of Rabelais ; it grew still more distinct amongst his immediate and later successors. The satire of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* was, as we have seen, twofold in its character, representing the twofold cause of the French national spirit in the pursuit of its vocation. On the one hand we have the broad and liberal current of enlightened scepticism, making use of a more or less refined mockery, a more or less caustic and bitter wit, displaying itself in the virile invectives of Henri Estienne, the classical hypercriticisms of Pasquier, the elegant and shrewd discursiveness of Pascal and Montaigne. On the other hand we find the vagrant humour and trivial facetious-

<sup>1</sup> *Pantagruel*, book v. ch. xi.

ness of the buffoon, the coarse license of the mountebank and the clown, hitting their mark no less surely, and hardly less effectively, though the objects at which they aim are less difficult of reach. In this class of the imitators of Rabelais occur the names of men like Noël du Faül,<sup>1</sup> an eager relater of old Greek, Italian, and French stories of the broader kind, with little spirit save in the appreciation of his originals; Béroalde de Verville,<sup>2</sup> whose *Moyen de Parvenir* has more of the salt of genuine satire—so much so as to earn for him great praise of competent critics;<sup>3</sup> and a host of lesser lights, all of whom shine with more or less distinct reflection of the great luminary of their age. Rabelais is, in fact, the centre of a new system in the literary heavens; though, it would be superfluous to say, he is not himself the original source of the prevailing satire of the sixteenth century. Rather call him the focus of the converging rays which he was destined to gather up and direct, through a new medium, upon the successive ages of posterity; the creature of his past who was to assist in the creation of his future. Best-endowed child of the early Renaissance, he was the ablest and most influential teacher of his age, because he was the grandest product of that revived spirit of French satirical philosophy which had already given to the world the author of *Pathelin*, and which was yet to evolve the author of *Tartuffe*.

<sup>1</sup> Died about 1585.

<sup>2</sup> 1558-1612.

<sup>3</sup> M. Paul Lacroix says in his edition of this author: "Le génie de Rabelais éclate à chaque instant dans ce livre, auquel il ne manque que son nom."

## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. MONTAIGNE AND THE MORALISTS.

" I MAKE no doubt that I speak often of matters that were better treated by masters of a speciality, and with greater genuineness. For here you have merely the efforts of my natural faculties, not in any sense of acquired ones; and whosoever may convict me of ignorance will prove nothing against me, for I would scarcely answer for any one of my discourses, who do not answer for myself, nor am content with myself. Let him who seeks for science angle for it where it dwells; there is naught whereof I make less profession. Here are my fancies by which I aim to give knowledge, not of things but of myself; these, it may hap, will be known to me hereafter, or have been known to me heretofore, just as chance may have taken me where they have stood revealed; but I remember them no more, and if I am a man of some reading, I am a man of no recollection; thus I guarantee nothing for certain, except it be to make known how far, for the present hour, extends the knowledge which I have thereof. Let none have regard to the subjects, but to the fashion which I give them; let him see, whatever I may borrow, if I have known fitly how to heighten or to aid the discovery, which comes always from myself; for I cause others—not my mind but my companions—to say that which I cannot say so well, for the weakness of my language or the weakness of my sense. I do not count my borrowings, I weigh them, and if I had wished to make them valuable by their number, I should have furnished myself with twice as many. . . . Herein,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, bk. ii., ch. x. " Je ne fais point de doute qu'il ne m'advienne souvent de parler de choses qui sont mieulx traictées chez les maistres du metier, et plus veritablement. C'est icy purement l'essay de mes

reader, you have a book of good faith. It warns you from the outset that I have proposed to myself no other end than a domestic and private one: I have had in it no consideration of your service nor of my glory; my powers are not equal to so great a design. . . . My faults shall be clearly read therein, my imperfections and my candid form, in so far as public reverence has permitted me."<sup>1</sup>

It is Montaigne<sup>2</sup> who speaks; and in these few words you have an epitome of the man and of his writings. It may be, as one of his critics says,<sup>3</sup> that a man of his wide reading cannot fail to impart a knowledge of things—cannot avoid giving us science as well as fancies. But Montaigne knew himself better than his critic knew him, and what he says of himself is true. One would scarcely undertake to acquit him of false modesty, or of self-conscious humility; but the fact remains that the author of the unique *Essais*, which have not

faulxtez naturelles, et nullement des acquises: et qui me surprendra d'ignorance, il ne fera rien contre moy; car à peine respondroy ie à aultruy de mes discours, qui ne m'en responds point à moy, n'y n'en suis satisfait. Qui sera en recherche de science, si la pesche où elle se loge: il n'est rien dequoy ie face moins de profession. Ce sont icy mes fantasies, par lesquelles ie ne tasche point de donner à cognoistre les choses mais moy: elles me seront à l'aventure cogneues un iour, on l'ont aultrefois esté, selon que la fortune m'a peu porter sur les lieux où elles estoient esclaireies; mais il ne m'en souvient plus; et si ie suis homme de quelque leçon, ie suis homme de nulle retention: ainsi je ne pieuis aulcune certitude, si ce n'est de faire cognoistre iusques à quel point monte, pour ceste heure, la cognoissance que j'en ay. Qu'on ne s'attende pas aux matières, mais à la façon qui l'y donne: qu'on veoye, en ce que j'emprunte, si j'ay scu choisir de quoy rehauser ou secourir proprement l'invention, qui vient tousiours de moy; car ie fois dire aux aultres, non à ma teste, mais à ma suite, ce que ie ne puis si bien dire, par foiblesse de mon langage, ou par foiblesse de mon sens. Je ne compte pas mes emprunts, ie les peise; et si ie les eusse voulu faire valoir par nombre, ie m'en fousse chargé deux fois autant."

<sup>1</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, Preface to bk. i. "C'est icy un livre de bonne foy, lecteur. Il t'avertit dez l'entree, que ie ne m'y suis proposé aulcune fin, que domestique et privee: ie n'y ai eu nulle consideration de ton service, ny de ma gloire: mes forces ne sont pas capables d'un tel dessein. . . . Mes defaults s'y lient au vil, mes imperfections et ma forme naïve, autant que la reverence publique me l'a permis."

<sup>2</sup> 1533-1592.

<sup>3</sup> Servan.



forfeited their popularity through so many ages, was before all things a literary *flâneur*; a gossip and not a teacher; superficial rather than profound. A deep thinker he hardly deserves to be called;<sup>1</sup> for his shrewdness of expression was more a natural turn of thought than an acquisition. As a boy, we cannot doubt it, Montaigne was quaint and acute, to the occasional discomfiture of his father and his schoolmasters; as a man he had precisely those qualities which make a capital after-dinner talker, which give country gentlemen pre-eminence in the justice-room and the council-chamber, which gain for their possessors a respect not unmixed with fear from their less ready-witted and quick-tongued associates. The dry humour, the satire, the homely common-sense of this aristocrat of the sixteenth century were not by any means invariably kind and conciliatory. There was a trace of bitterness in the mind which, rebelling so stoutly against the pedantry and formalism of its class, rebelled quite as strongly against the prevailing excitability of its age. Montaigne stood midway between the doctors who grudged the new light of the masses and the extravagant rebels against authority who set no bounds to their trenchant satire. From the height of an unconfessed philosophy, and the breadth of an unconfessed store of experience, he despised both the one and the other; and it is difficult to say which of the two feelings he has contrived most successfully to conceal. No doubt the bent of his mind led him to sympathise more with the satirical school whereof Rabelais was the great leader and exponent; yet in the didactic form of his style he approaches rather to the fashion of the scholastics. Take, for example, the essay on Democritus and Heraclitus, than which the sixteenth century affords little, in the vulgar tongue, more correctly and severely critical:—

<sup>1</sup> Villemain, *Essai sur Montaigne*.

"Democritus and Heraclitus were two philosophers, of whom the first, finding man's estate ridiculous and vain, never appeared abroad but with a jeering and laughing countenance. Whereas Heraclitus, commiserating this condition of ours, appeared always with a sorrowful look and tears in his eyes.

'One always, when he o'er his threshold stept,  
Laugh'd at the world; the other always wept.'

I am clearly for the first humour; not because it is more pleasant to laugh than to weep, but because it is more scornful, and condemns us more than the other. I think we can never be sufficiently despised to our desert. Compassion and bewailing seem to imply some esteem for the thing bemoaned; whereas the things we laugh at we judge of no value. I do not think that we are so unhappy as we are vain, nor so malicious as silly; so mischievous as trifling, nor so miserable as we are vile. Therefore Diogenes, who passed away his time in rolling himself in his tub, and sniffed up his nose at the great Alexander, esteeming us flies or bladders puffed up with wind, was a more penetrating judge, and consequently more to my taste than Timon, surnamed the man-hater; for what a man hates he lays to heart. This last was an enemy to all mankind, did passionately wish our ruin, and avoided our conversation, as dangerous, wicked, and of depraved nature. The other valued us so little that we could neither trouble nor infect him by our contagion, and left us to herd with one another, not out of fear, but from contempt of our society, concluding us as incapable of doing good as ill."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Montaigne represents, if he did not inaugurate,

<sup>1</sup> *Essais*, bk. i. ch. L. "Democritus et Heraclitus ont été deux philosophes, desquels le premier trouvant vaine et ridicule l'humaine condition, ne sortoit en public qu'avecques un visage moqueur et riant; Heraclitus, ayant pitié et compassion de cette mesme condition nostre, en portoit le visage continuellement triste, et les yeulx chargez de larmes :

'Alter

Ridebat, quoties à lacrimis mercedem habuit.

Protristatque perire. Respondit contrarius alter."

J'ayme mieux la première humeur; non parce qu'il est plus plaisant de rire que de pleurer, mais parce qu'elle est plus desdaigneuse, et qu'elle nous condamne plus que l'autre; et il me semble que nous ne pouvons jamais estre assez mes-

the school of French satirists which, standing as it were between Calvin and Rabelais, avoided both the coarseness and abandon of the latter, and the ascetic sternness and awkward pleasantries of the former. The whole character of the man—nay, the whole character of the satirical Frenchman of whom he was the antetype—is expressed in the portrait which lies before us as we write. He is represented in his robes as Mayor of Bordeaux. One might take him, at the first glance, for a French Shakespeare, in gown, fur tippet, and ruffle; with a loose, low-crowned hat to hide the absence of the bump of veneration. But a closer attention soon reveals the difference. The forehead is high; but it lacks both the breadth and the fulness which strike us in the English poet. Perspicacity is here, and clearness, and power of concentration; but little imagination and less constructiveness. The eyes are small, but they denote shrewdness and reflection; whilst perhaps the most noticeable feature of all is the sneer which forces itself into prominence beneath the short moustache. It is the face of a man whose literary breadth might be infinitely superior to his moral breadth; whose judgment in matters of taste and whose catholicity in matters of criticism might far outweigh the firmness and independence of his character; who,

prenez selon nostre merite. La plainte et la commiseration sont meslees a quelque estimation de la chose qu'on plainet: les choses dequoy on se mocque, on les estime sans prix. Je ne pense point qu'il y ayt tant de malheur en nous, comme il y a de vanité; ny tant de malice, comme de sottise: nous ne sommes pas si pleins de mal, comme d'inanité; nous ne sommes pas si misérables, comme nous sommes vils. Ainsi Diogenes, qui baguenandoit à part soy, roulant son tonneau, et hochant du nez le grand Alexandre, nous estimant des mouches, ou des vessies pleines de vent, estoit bien iuge plus aigre et plus poignant, et par consequent plus iuste à mon humeur que Timon, celui qui feut surnommé le Hâisseur des hommes; car ce qu'on hait, on le prend à cœur. Cettuy cy nous souhaittoit du mal, estoit passionné du desir de nostre ruine, fuyoit nostre conversation comme dangereuse, de meschants et de nature despravée: l'autre nous estimoit si peu, que nous ne pourrions ny le troubler ny l'alterer par nostre contagion; nous laissoit de compaignie, non pour la crainte, mais pour le desdaing, de nostre commerce; il ne nous estoit capables ny de bien ny de mal faire."

at his desk, might be relied upon for coolness, courage, and discrimination, but in whom it might not be safe to trust if your interests were opposed to the feelings of his order and the expressed wishes of his superiors. If he had lived at the present time, he would have been returned to the Senate as a supporter of Marshal Macmahon, backed by the whole influence of a Conservative prefect, and aided by hundreds of Republican votes.

But he was born in the thirty-third year of the sixteenth century. He received a sound education, learning, from his earliest youth, to speak Latin, and being awakened every morning by the sound of music. He went to study the law at Toulouse, Bordeaux, and Paris, became a magistrate, a member of the Parliament of Bordeaux—a place which he soon resigned,—knight of the order of Saint-Michel, gentleman of the chamber of the king, and, later, of the Queen of Navarre. He retired at last to his castle of Montaigne, in the Périgord, where he composed his *Essais*—the first edition of which appeared in 1580—travelled for about a year and a half in Switzerland, Italy, and the Tyrol, was elected mayor of Bordeaux for three consecutive years, went to Paris, visited the assembly of the States General at Blois, and died about eighteen months before Henri IV. was crowned, an event which he had so ardently wished to see. Of his six daughters only one survived him.

To turn from an author to his works, from the man as we see him in his actions to the man as he betrays himself in his writings, is not always a pleasure. It has happened in a hundred notable instances that a great and worthy man, writing in some less elevated mood, upon a subject or in a style unsuited to his particular faculties, leaves behind him an imperishable reproach upon himself, or at least a blot which those who love him would gladly, if it were possible, expunge. Worst of all is the case of those who, having once



vindicated their claim to be enrolled amongst the literary creators whom the world delights to honour, live to dim the splendour of their reputation by the license of passion or the reactionary weakness of old age. Milton, forgetting both dignity and refinement in his controversies with Salmasius; Villon, suffering himself at the close of life to speak slightly of the offspring of his adult genius;—we need not accumulate the illustrations of so distasteful a phenomenon. The converse truth is infinitely more refreshing to contemplate; and in Montaigne we have an author to whose works we can turn, as the world has ever turned, with undiluted satisfaction; and, if it must be confessed, with a sigh of relief upon passing from the man to his writings. There is no need to exaggerate the significance of those less pleasing episodes in the life of Montaigne which recent researches have brought to the light of day. On the other hand, it would be an injustice to his memory not to point out that these are at the worst but isolated facts—contradictions, it may well be, in the character of a wise and prudent man. Whereas there are no such inconsistencies to lament in the fruits of Montaigne's genius, such as we find them displayed in his sparkling and philosophical *Essays*; and it is by these, rather than by the meagre facts of his life, that we must decide upon his due position in our literary record—by these that we have a right to determine the place which he shall hold in our esteem.

If in Montaigne we can perceive the influence of, or, at the very least, a natural succession to Rabelais, illustrated by the higher, more delicate and refined mood of satire, yet at the same time Montaigne was himself the leader of a school, and has left a deep imprint upon the literary fashion of his age. He was a moralist *par excellence*, a metaphysician, who, in style and tone, was the progenitor of Charron, of Vauvenargues, of La Bruyère, of La Rochefoucauld. His reflection, his taste, his critical instinct, his *incuriosité*, to use

a word of his own, and his eclecticism, are conspicuous in every one of his discourses, as they are conspicuous in his disciples. In one respect, perhaps, he is behind his successors ; though even here the theoretical shortcoming may be set down by his admirers in the list of his virtues. He is more susceptible than either of those whom we have called his disciples ; more impressible, more emotional, more human. Is it a flaw in his ethics—this continual reference to the feelings, to nature, to the vacillating judgment of the heart, which reminds us rather of La Fontaine than of La Rochefoucauld ? In England we may consider it so, in our preference for cool argument and phlegmatic “common sense.” But Montaigne was a Gaul ; not only in the character of his satire, not only in his quick sympathy and indignation, but also in the elasticity of mind which leads him to make pleasure, ease, and gaiety, at once the method and the aim of his morality.

The loftiness, the dynamic power of this morality, cannot surely be said to suffer by the impassioned outbursts which mark the contact of this unconscious preacher's mind with the meanness, the crimes, the miseries of humanity. In the fervour of his declamations he gives us, here and there, a foreshadow of the theoretical socialism of our own day—an antetype of the dignified radicalism of one of his greatest eulogists, Rousseau. Hear him inveigh against the pomp and luxury of kings.

“To the subjects who look on at these triumphs it suggests itself that their own wealth is being displayed before them, and they are being feasted at their own expense. For nations readily assume of their kings, as we of our servants, that they ought to make a duty of setting before us in abundance all that we need, but that they ought by no means to touch it themselves. . . . Generally the people are right, and their eyes are fed upon what was meant to feed their stomachs. . . . To be exact, a king has properly nothing of his own : he owes himself to others.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Il semble aux sujets spectateurs de ces triomphes qu'on leur fait

Or again :—

“Look there on the ground at the poor fellows whom we see scattered about, their heads weighed down after their labours, who know neither Aristotle nor Cato, nor example nor precept. From them nature draws lessons of constancy and patience, day after day, more pure and correct than those which we study so heedfully at school. How many am I wont to see who make light of poverty ! How many who desire death, or who approach it without alarm and without grief.”<sup>1</sup>

The master's sympathy was before the mind of the disciple when La Bruyère wrote :<sup>2</sup>—

“We see certain savage beasts, male and female, scattered over the country, black, livid, scorched by the sun, bound to the soil which they trample on, and which they sow with unrestrained obstinacy. They have, as it were, an articulate voice, and when they raise themselves on their feet they show a human face ; and, in fact, they are men. At night they retire to dens, in which they live on black bread, water, and grapes ; they save other men the labour of sowing, toiling, and gathering for subsistence, and deserve thus that they should not lack the bread which they have sown.”

The vehement assertion of the claims of social equality had begun in earnest. The literary posterity of the leaders

montre de leurs propres richesses et qu'on les festoie à leurs despnes. Car les peuples présumant volontiers des rois, comme nous faisons de nos valets, qu'ils doivent prendre soin de nous apprestre en abondance tout ce qu'il nous faut, mais qu'ils n'y doivent aucunement toucher de leur part . . . tant il y a que le plus souvent le peuple a raison et qu'on repaist ses yeux de ce quoy il avoit à repaistre son ventre. . . . A le prendre exactement, un roi n'a proprement rien sien, il se doit soy-même à autrui.”

<sup>1</sup> Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. iii. ch. xii. “Regardons à terre : les pauvres gents que nous y voyeons espandus, la teste penchante après leur besongne, quy ne sçavent ny Aristote ny Caton, ny exemple, ny précepte ; de ceulx là tire nature tous les jours des effets de constance et de patience, plus purs et plus roides que ne sont ceulx que nous estudions si curieusement en l'eschole ; combien en veois je ordinairement qui mesconnoissent la pauvreté ! combien qui desirent la mort, ou qui la passent sans alarme et sans affliction.”

<sup>2</sup> La Bruyère, *Caractères ; de l'Homme*.

of the *bagaudes* inaugurated a new campaign in the sixteenth century, which was to rage still more fiercely after the cruel experiences of the Fronde. And Montaigne, who had raised the standard—Montaigne, the learned recluse, who desired that death might find him “occupied in digging in his garden, and not caring for her;” who could draw wisdom for all ages by simply “looking into his heart and writing,” like his chivalrous contemporary Philip Sidney—Montaigne could say “I write my book for few men, and for a few years.”<sup>1</sup>

Observe, at the same time, that Montaigne was pre-eminently a man of wise and prudent counsel, sincerely attached to existing institutions, sincerely opposed to popular agitation or rapid changes in the state. A theoretical Radical, in short; impatient of abuse and wrong, firm in his love of order and settled government; with just so much of genuine Conservatism as enabled him to be moderately content with the laws and regulations of his country; satisfied to let things rest, for want of firm belief in the power of any man to improve them. “These long and vast discussions,”<sup>2</sup> he says, “on the best form of society, and the regulations best fitted to unite us together, are discussions suitable only to the exercise of our minds, as in art there are many subjects which have their essence in agitation and dispute, and have no vitality beyond.”<sup>3</sup> Such and such a picture of the model of government might be in place in a new world; but we have a world already made and shaped after particular fashions; we do not beget it, like Pyrrha or Cadmus. Whatever method

<sup>1</sup> Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. iii. ch. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> In one point Montaigne seems to have been an agitator and an innovator,—in words. His style is not considered very good, but the following words were first brought in general use by him: *acoutanceur*, *décession*, *contenance*, *encompté*, *enjulé*, *berceuilleur*, *berceuillete*, *se gendarmer*, *impie*, *impécheable*, *inévitable*, *inimaginable*, *rapable*, and *ragabondeur*. He employed a great many more which have not been adopted.



we adopt to reconstitute and arrange it, we can hardly twist it from its wonted form without breaking it altogether.”<sup>1</sup> He quotes :

“‘ Love the state such as you see it :  
If it is royal love royalty ;  
If it is oligarchical or popular,  
Love it also ; for God caused you to be born there.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

This is what good Monsieur de Pibrac, whom we have just lost, says of it.” Pibrac’s contemporaries called him pre-eminently gentle, prudent, and amiable, but he was nevertheless a virulent apologist of the St. Bartholomew murders.

Montaigne displayed his catholicity, his balance of mind, his perception of a possible better, and his contentment with the actual good, in matters of religious faith and opinion. He depreciated polemics, and dreaded innovation. For his own part he could go so far as to accept even miracles ; reproving the rashness which despises what it cannot comprehend. He has not a word against the monks ; he maintains that it is not for a wise man to decide the extent of the obedience which we owe to the ecclesiastical authorities. At most we may wash our hands of such obedience : we may not tamper with it. In religion, it is manifest, Montaigne was a Conservative ; and yet he was in fact the prince of sceptics. His chapter on Prayers<sup>3</sup> is couched in language of reverent simplicity ; though he tells us that the Lord’s Prayer is the only one which he retains in his memory. Reverent, however, as he is, and outwardly in harmony with the

<sup>1</sup> Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. iii. ch. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gui du Faur, lord of Pibrac, died in 1584. His book was called *Quatrains contenant préceptes et enseignements utiles pour la vie de l’homme* :

“ Ayme l’estat tel que tu le veois estre :  
S’il est royal, ayme la royauté ;  
S’il est de peu, ou bien communauté  
Ayme l’aussi ; car Dieu t’y a faist naistre.”

<sup>3</sup> Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. i. ch. 56.

orthodoxy of his day, the very principles of his philosophy declare him a sceptic. The Church would have been more reasonable, from its own point of view, in trying to suppress Montaigne than either Rabelais or Marot. We ask ourselves—it is thus that he reveals his true condition of mind—touching any incomprehensible matter, “How this can be?” and find our answer. It would have been better to ask, “Is it so?” Once satisfied on our own part, “it is a work of charity to persuade others; to which end none is afraid of adding from his own ingenuity as much as he sees necessary to his argument, in order to meet the resistance or the defect which he conceives as existing in the other’s mind.”

This was, for the sixteenth century, the essence of fine satire and delicate raillery. How different from the knock-down blows of Rabelais; and yet the age demanded both the club and the rapier.

## § 2. MONTAIGNE’S FRIENDS AND DISCIPLES.

Amongst the intimate friends and disciples of Montaigne, whose companionship brought him the consolation of a literary sympathy, and to one at least of whom he left the legacy of his ardent and well-poised spirit, were La Boétie, Charron, and several other scholars and philosophers, ind-fatigable explorers of the past and eager anticipators of the future. La Boétie<sup>1</sup> was a young man who, even at the age of sixteen, was amongst the first to interpret to the world the portentous fact that its future was, as it were, to grow out of its past—and out of a past which fifteen centuries had buried under their accumulated ruins. He died at the age of thirty-two, nine-and-twenty years before Montaigne, who was his intimate friend, and gave as his reason for being so: “*parce que*

<sup>1</sup> 1530-1563.

*c'était lui, parce que c'était moi.*" The young scholar lived long enough to justify the praises of the friend who has immortalised him, though not long enough, it may be, to show of what lofty flights his spirit was capable. Already at a very youthful age he was one of the councillors of the Parliament of Bordeaux, became there acquainted with Montaigne, and wrote translations of Aristotle, Plutarch, and Xenophon. But his fame rests chiefly on his vivid and eloquent pamphlet *De la Servitude Volontaire*, written in 1546, which circulated for about thirty years in manuscript, without author's name, without title, and without date, and to which the public had given the epigrammatic name *Le Contr'un*.<sup>1</sup> Judge of the noble style and grandeur of thought and language of a boy of sixteen years old, by a single specimen, in which he insists upon the universal love of liberty in all worthy men, and upon the strength which such a feeling inspires in those who possess it :—

"Place on one side fifty thousand armed men, and the same number on the other side ; set them in battle array, and let them meet ; the first free, fighting for their liberty, the others fighting to take this away ; to which would one incline to assure the victory ? Which would one think would advance more lightly to the contest—those who look to the preservation of their liberty as the reward of their labour, or those who can expect nothing from the blows which they give or receive than the slavery of others ? The first have ever before their eyes the good fortune of their past life, the expectation of a similar lot in the future. They remember not so much that which they endure, the brief period during which the battle must continue, as that which it will be their fate for ever to endure—the fate of their children

<sup>1</sup> It has long been stated that La Boétie, indignant on account of the cruelties which were inflicted by De Montmorency in 1548 upon the inhabitants of Guienne, who had revolted against the salt-tax and other burdensome imposts, had written his *De La Servitude*, but it is now proved that this pamphlet, which is more general in its applications, was written in 1546, two years before the terrible vengeance was inflicted.

and their posterity. The others have nothing to make them brave but a little spice of covetousness, which recoils instantly against danger, which cannot be so ardent as it ought to be, and which seems to flicker out beneath the least drop of blood from their wounds."<sup>1</sup>

Montaigne wrote, after La Boétie's death, to his (Montaigne's) father: "To make you understand the invincible courage in a body worn out and broken down by the furious efforts of death and pain, I confess that I should require a far better style than my own; for whilst he was yet alive, when he spoke of grave and important matters, he spoke in such a way that it would be difficult to write it well, so that indeed it seemed as though his spirit and his tongue did violence to themselves, as though to render him their last service. For without doubt, I never saw him charged with so many and so fine imaginations, nor with so much eloquence as he was throughout this sickness."

There is no mention of Charron<sup>2</sup> in the *Essays*; and he does not seem to have made Montaigne's acquaintance until the year 1589, three years before the master's death. Perhaps it is as well for his fame that he did not know the author of the *Essays* longer than three years, for, as it is, the excess of his admiration for one so immeasurably greater than himself

<sup>1</sup> "Qu'on mette d'un costé cinquante mille hommes en armes; d'un autre, autant; qu'on les range en bataille; qu'ils viennent à se joindre, les uns libres combattant pour leur franchise, les autres pour la leur oster; auxquels promettra on par coniecture la victoire? lesquels pensera on qui plus gaillamment iront au combat, ou ceulx qui esperent pour guerdon de leur peine l'entretenement de leur liberté, ou ceulx qui ne peuvent attendre loyer des coups qu'ils donnent ou qu'ils reçoivent, que la servitude d'autrui? Les uns ont toujours devant leurs yeux le bonheur de leur vie passée, l'attente de pareil ayse à l'advenir; il ne leur souvient pas tant de ce qu'ils endurent ce peu de temps que dure une bataille, comme de ce qu'il conviendrait à jamais endurer à eulx, à leurs enfans et à toute la posterité; les autres n'ont rien qui les enhardisse, qu'une petite pointe de convoitise qui se rebouche soudain contre le danger, et qui ne peult estre si ardente qu'elle ne se doibre et semble estendre par la moindre goutte de sang qui sort de leurs playes."

<sup>2</sup> 1544-1603.



has dwarfed his intellect, and made him little else than an imitator. A French critic<sup>1</sup> has not much overstated the case in saying that "there are not many books so devoid of originality as the *Traité de la Sagesse*." The method, the text, the style, the very illustrations and quotations, are Montaigne's; and when Montaigne fails him, he has recourse to Montaigne's library, taking the gist of whole chapters at a time from Seneca, Plutarch, Justus Lipsius, Bodin, or du Vair. Charron is, in fact, rather a decoctor than an author; but he has method. If his powers are almost limited to cooking what other men hunt and kill, he has at least one gift in addition: he knows how to lay the table. And in this he excels; not so much by his general effect as seen from the gallery, but by an occasional grouping of dishes, by an arrangement of the épergnes, which catch the eye of an individual guest. There is some credit in arranging a poor feast like a costly one, and in dressing a rabbit so as to make it look as imposing as a hare.

Charron's indebtedness to Montaigne is manifest in the very subdivision of his subject. The first part of his treatise deals with "The knowledge of one's self, and of the condition of humanity;" the second enumerates the "Instructions and general rules of Wisdom;" the third treats of the "Special aspects of Wisdom in the four moral virtues." From the study of one's self, we find scepticism follows as a matter of course—which Montaigne rather implied than said; though he undoubtedly implied it. Nevertheless, says Charron, there is a God, Christianity is the only true religion, Catholicism is the only true Christianity—and so forth, until we wonder where, in this remarkable system of philosophy, the unavoidable scepticism is to find its place. What with Montaigne was a subtle indecision between, or simultaneous attraction by Christianity and scepticism, becomes in Charron a flat inconsistency. His genius for imitation carried him so far that,

<sup>1</sup> A. Desjardin, *Moralistes Français du XVIIe. siècle*, "Charron."

being in fact a better Catholic than his master, he yet contrived to make room in his anatomy of wisdom for a scepticism which he was not wise enough to feel, out of sheer admiration for his teacher. And, this absurdity being not sufficiently glaring, he goes on to construct an elaborate theory based on universal knowledge and belief. Enough, perhaps, of the wisdom of Charron.

Amongst the moralists of the sixteenth century, whereof Montaigne formed the centre and the type, we may reasonably include De Pibrac, who, as we have seen, predeceased the author of the *Essays*. Next to Montaigne himself, perhaps Pibrac had the most wholesome influence on his generation.<sup>1</sup> And, indeed, there are, in these elegant quatrains, a freshness, a cosmopolitan fitness, grace, and common-sense, which remind us forcibly of the essays of the writer's friend. Montaigne said that a man cannot be judged by one or two acts; that his vice or virtue must be perceived in his whole life, of which it has, in fact, been the accumulated effect. Pibrac says—

“Virtue and morals are not acquired by study,  
Nor by money, nor by favour of kings,  
Nor by one act, nor by two, nor by three,  
But by constancy and long habit.”<sup>2</sup>

And again, virtue is said to “be lying between two extremes, to exceed in nothing, and to be wanting in nothing.” And of honour he says—

<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Roche, who edited in 1747 the quatrains of several old authors, calls Pibrac “an instructor of the youth of France up to the times of our fathers,” that is up to the middle of the seventeenth century. Molière quotes him also in *Sganarelle*.

<sup>2</sup> “Vertu et mœurs ne s’acquièrent par l’étude,  
Ni par argent, ni par faveur des rois,  
Ni par un acte, ou par deux ou par trois,  
Ains par constance et par longue habitude.”

"Love honour more than your own life,  
 I mean honour which is consistent with duty,  
 Which one ought to render, according to human power,  
 To God, to the King, to the laws, to one's native land."<sup>1</sup>

Did Pibrac think that he was loving honour when he wrote the apology of the St. Bartholomew's Day? And yet he was the moralist of his age, and though he wrote but little, he may not inaptly be compared with the moralist of another age and another country,<sup>2</sup> who, in strains that have the same ring as Pibrac's, writes of Freedom as

"Turning to scorn with lip divine  
 The falsehood of extremes."

### § 3. CONTEMPORARY LAWYERS.

About the year 1570 Etienne Pasquier, himself an advocate, wrote to his eldest son Théodore—

"The first recommendation which you shall have upon joining the bar is to arm yourself with two things—good-will and perseverance. I have seen many come to the Palais (de Justice) with a determination to profit by it, but the length of the course of lectures proving a weariness to them, caused them to change their minds and turn their attention to some other end, which done, all the advantage they had reaped ended in smoke. I have seen others frequenting the Palais with much assiduity, but with so cold a disposition that they have, in spite of everything, continued to remain unemployed. . . . Do not anticipate that I shall teach you those masterpieces of oratory which were given us on this subject by the ancient Greeks and Romans—the many modes in which we should vary our eloquence, the method of exciting the

<sup>1</sup> "Ayme l'honneur plus que ta propre vie,  
 J'entends l'honneur qui consiste au devoir,  
 Que rendre on doit, selon l'humain pouvoir,  
 A Dieu, au roi, aux lois, à la patrie."

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson.

passions of those who hear us, the agreeable ending of a period, and an infinity of pretty flourishes wherewith their books and lessons are crammed. The whole artifice which I intend here to give you is to use no artifice. I desire that you should be simply a good man and a true. When I have said this I have said all. . . . The goal of the advocate in his pleading is to persuade the judges, and one is readily led by the mouth of him whom one considers to be a man of standing. On the other hand, acquire a sinister repute, bring forward as many elegancies and feints of rhetoric as you like, you may do more to tickle the ears of those who hear you, but you will persuade them far less, because every one will be on his guard, thanks to the opinion he has of you. Undertake no cause which you do not think good, for it will be vain to think of persuading your judges if you are not first yourself persuaded by your cause. Fight for the truth, and not for victory. . . . For the rest, I do not desire that you should be anything but a good and true man, for I wish that this quality should be armed with a lively force, to overwhelm vice, valorously to support the poor and afflicted, to make a shield of your conscience against the efforts of the strongest, who would abuse their authority and greatness for the ruin of the poorest. Put out of your head that courtiership which I see practised by some, who will not undertake causes against the great for fear of displeasing them. . . . There are two things which you ought carefully to observe: first, to give the least possible dissatisfaction to those who choose you for their advocate; the second, not too rudely to cross your opponents. You should maintain a cheerful manner with your clients, not be abrupt with them, endure their importunities, never losing sight of this consideration, that there is no more acute mental pain than that of those who go to law on their own account; not by any means that I would have you identify your opinions with their passions. If you think you can find honest solutions for their causes, it will not do to overlook them; if not, it is a crime against the Holy Ghost to feed them on vain hopes, plying them with all kinds of devices, more familiar in the court than I could wish, in order to protract the business. These are just so many tricks for the ruin of poor people. By following the course which I describe to you, you



will have a less busy practice, but it will be more substantial and honourable. . . . I would have you avaricious, but with a noble avarice ; with a greed for your honour, and not for money.”<sup>1</sup>

What a lesson here for younger generations of advocates ! What a dignity, an honesty, a grandeur of virtue and conscientiousness, not surpassed by the noblest special pleader of our own day ! And also, what a worthy product of the moral renaissance, whereof the triumphs were as great and as notable as those reaped by the renaissance of literature and art. Etienne Pasquier was a preacher, not by profession, not consciously, but because his lofty intellect soared above the little jealousies and bickerings of his day, and because the new light of the sixteenth century, setting in relief, here as elsewhere, the most characteristic aspect of his mind, displayed him to himself and to us as a pre-eminently moral man—a jurisconsult who set the claims of right above the traditions of the courts ; who, for his own part, reckoned himself before all things an advocate of just causes, but whom we must

<sup>1</sup> We give the beginning of Pasquier's letter in the original, as a specimen of his style :—“ La première recommandation qu'avez, entrant au barreau, sera de vous armer de deux choses : d'une bonne volonté et d'une continuë. J'en ai vu venir au palais avec une délibération d'y bien faire ; mais la longueur de l'estat se tournant en eux en langueur, leur faisait changer de propos et mettre leurs esprits en autre sujet ; quoy faisant, tout ce qu'ils avaient édifié s'évanouissait en fumée. J'en ai vu d'autres fréquenter le palais avec une longue assiduité, mais d'une volonté si froide, qu'ils sont du tout demeurez en friche. . . . N'attendez point ici que je vous enseigne tous ces masques d'oraison qui nous furent représentés en ce sujet par les anciens Grecs et Romains, en combien de façons il faut diversifier son bien dire, la manière de remuer les passions de ceux qui escoutent, la closture agréable d'une période et une infinité de belles fleurettes dont leurs livres et enseignements sont farcis. Tout l'artifice que j'entends icy vous donner, est de n'user point d'artifice ; je veux que vous soyez prud'homme : quand je dis ce mot, je dis tout. . . . Le but où vise l'avocat par ses plaidoiries est de persuader ses juges ; et on se laisse aisément mener par la bouche de celui que l'on estime homme de bien. Au contraire, soyez en réputation de meschant, apportez tant d'élégances et hypocrisies de rhétorique qu'il vous plaira, vous délecterez davantage les oreilles de ceux qui vous escoutent, mais les persuaderez beaucoup moins, parce que chacun se tiendra sur ses gardes, par l'opinion qu'il aura de vous.”

reckon as before all things an advocate of justice. He had caught the spirit of the new birth, and pertains to the future rather than to the past, as truly as either Rabelais or Montaigne ; and if we do not compare him with those two master-minds of the Renaissance, it is because his work and influence belong not to literature so much as to jurisprudence. His genius, moreover, was less brilliant than that of his two great contemporaries, if not less fervid. We will not say that he stands on a lower level than they, but the mark which he has made is less distinct.

Pasquier was a Parisian, born in 1529, before the death of Erasmus, before the birth of Montaigne, before Rabelais had written his *Gargantua*, and his life extended over fifteen years of the subsequent century. He died five years after the massacre of Henri IV., after the death of Desportes, Regnier, and Charron. He had seen the first successes and the last discouragement of Protestantism in France, and had lived through the protracted wars, and so long beyond them that he must have heard statesmen and scholars contending for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It was within the range of possibility that he should have sat at the feet of Machiavelli and held in his arms the infant La Rochefoucauld. Never was there a lifetime which embraced within itself more varied and contrasted periods in the history of a single literature. He studied law first at Toulouse, and passed from there to Mariano Sozzini, a celebrated jurist, at Bologna. Although he had devoted himself to jurisprudence with good will and a persevering spirit, as he advised his son to do in his turn, he was by no means a mere lawyer. As a man of letters, a critic, and a connoisseur, he took part in the intense literary activity of his age. Amongst his remains are a large number of *Letters*, addressed to his sons and the more intimate of his friends, which amply attest the catholicity of his taste and judgment. The most ambitious of his literary efforts was a

volume of *Recherches de la France*, in nine books, a work insufficient, indeed, to earn for its author high rank as a historian, yet very readable. A volume of *Notes and Queries*, another of the *Curiosities of Literature*, a dozen chapters of Selden's *Table-Talk* and Southey's *Commonplace Book*, would not ill represent this heterogeneous, discursive, anecdotal book. Pasquier had an enthusiasm for the history of his country—"ma France," as he delights to put it; and he is nowhere more ardent in expression than when he reviews the intellectual progress of his age.<sup>1</sup> "It was a grand war," he says, "which was undertaken against ignorance;" and the martial view suits him so well that he suffers it to carry him through some score of pages. He recounts the "forerunners" of the great sixteenth century poets.<sup>2</sup> "Then, later on, there joined the ranks Pierre de Ronsard of Vendôme, and Joachim du Bellay of Anjou, both gentlemen of noble birth, who wrote happily, but Ronsard in particular, so that many enrolled themselves under their banners. You might have said that age was entirely consecrated to the Muses. . . . I myself, after this beginning, gave to the world my *Monophile*, which was favourably received." He was more than eighty years of age when he published a trifle called *La Jeunesse de Pasquier*, wherein he laughs gaily over the poetical frailties of his youth.

Enough has been said to indicate the extent of Pasquier's literary scope, which, wide as it was, would have attracted even less attention but for the great elegance and concision of his style. He was unquestionably the purest writer of French prose in the sixteenth century, and his influence upon the language was hardly inferior to that of Malherbe. As a juriconsult he was formed upon his master, Cujas<sup>3</sup> of Toulouse, a pupil of the celebrated Italian lawyer Andrea Alciati,<sup>4</sup> through

<sup>1</sup> Book vii.

<sup>2</sup> *Recherches de la France*, Book vii. ch. 6.

<sup>3</sup> 1522-1590.

<sup>4</sup> 1492-1550.

whom another channel of influence had been opened between Italy and France. The latter had settled in Bourges, on the invitation of Francis the First; and within a few years he had gathered round him a school of Roman law whose studies were directed upon entirely novel principles and methods, and which substituted in France a new science of jurisprudence for the time-worn traditions of the past fifteen centuries. Cujas himself laboured all his life to classify and explain the fruits of Roman legislation after a scheme never hitherto applied to them. No longer satisfied with the positive code which, from the time of Justinian—not to go farther back—had been accepted as it stood, without reference to the sources of its inspiration, he brought to bear upon it all the light of history, antiquity, scholarship, and scientific research. Every individual law was studied afresh, in connection with the epoch and the special circumstances of its first promulgation. Roman jurisprudence was reconquered by these brave and indefatigable students, who probed laboriously under the accumulated ruins of ages, until they reached once again the vitality and originality of ancient Rome. What Cujas did at Toulouse, and for Roman law, Dumoulin<sup>1</sup> did at Paris for the civil law. These were succeeded in their labours by that famous group of French magistrates who have shed lustre on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Henri de Mesmes,<sup>2</sup> a lawyer and a statesman, describing the studies to which he and his fellow-students of the same school were wont to devote themselves, says: "We were up at four in the morning, and after saying our prayers to God, went at five o'clock to work, with our great books under our arms, our writing-cases and candles in our hands." And Loisel,<sup>3</sup> an intimate friend of Etienne Pasquier, relates how "Pithou (one of the writers of the *Satire Ménippée*), Cujas, and myself used to assemble every evening after supper in the library,

<sup>1</sup> 1500-1566.<sup>2</sup> 1531-1596.<sup>3</sup> 1536-1617.



and there worked until three o'clock in the morning." It was an age of hard labour with these early tillers of the classical soil, who, be it remembered, had none of the stepping-stones and royal roads to learning which, thanks in part to them, the present age possesses.

Loisel, whom we have just mentioned, was a Parliamentary advocate, who divided his mind between the study of the law and the cultivation of classical literature. He has left us a monument of his friend Pasquier in a dialogue which takes the name of the latter for its title,<sup>1</sup> and which is copied from the model of Cicero's *Brutus*. It aims at presenting the type of the French magistracy of that day—the type of the well-born, well-educated men, who, having the means of idleness, chose to make them the means of study and devotion to a lofty duty, and who admitted no rival in their attachment to knowledge except their ardent, ever-present, and ever-confessed love of their country. It was to Loisel that Nicholas Pasquier, the second son of Etienne, wrote a description of his father's deathbed, which is extant to this day, and which is not unworthy to stand as a commentary upon and an illustration of Cicero's philosophic treatise *De Senectute*. Quite in the spirit of Cicero are the sentences which conclude this dignified expression of filial piety. "It is an admirable and honourable issue of life for him who, having lived a long time in health and enjoyment, dies with a sound mind and an undimmed understanding. A fortunate and refined old age is given by God to him alone who is a man of good position."<sup>2</sup>

Nicholas Pasquier,<sup>3</sup> the second son of Etienne Pasquier, "maître des requêtes," in the French courts, has left behind him, in addition to his *Letters*, a treatise on the education of the young, under the title of *Le Gentilhomme*. This work, which exhibits much of the elegance and sus-

<sup>1</sup> *Pasquier, ou Dialogue des Avocats du Parlement de Paris.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de Nicolas Pasquier*, iv. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Born about 1560.

tained loftiness of the noble style on which it was modelled, deserves to be read after the passages in which Rabelais unfolds his educational theories, not merely for its own intrinsic merits, but because it starts from an identical basis in the circumstances and conditions of the age. But it is in his *Letters* that we must look for the intellectual measure of Nicholas Pasquier—and, as a consequence, of his time. The spirit of Roman philosophy, caught and assimilated by Frenchmen of the sixteenth century, was cherished and acted up to amidst the political and religious turmoils of the reigns of Francis the First, Charles the Ninth, and Henry the Fourth. This is what we find in the letters and memoirs, the essays and narratives of the Pasquiers and their contemporaries. It is a modern Pliny who writes such words as these which follow ; and it is a state of things not unlike that existing in Pliny's time which called them forth.

“How shall we judge those criminals of the so-called reformed religion, with a view of punishing them—those who think they are doing right in holding to the opinion which was impressed upon their minds in early youth, which they believe to be the pure truth ? For what more certain argument could there be to show that they believe it, than that they die obstinate in their belief ? It would indeed be a very elastic conscience which could condemn them for a religion which they hold to be the true faith.”<sup>1</sup>

And again, with a remarkable independence and impartiality of judgment :—

“Christianity is an accident of humanity ; consequently it is

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Nicolas Pasquier*, book ix. letter 11. “Comment jugerait-on ceux de la religion prétendue réformée criminels pour les punir, eux qui pensent bien faire en tenant l'opinion qui leur a esté imprimée en l'esprit dès leur basse jeunesse, laquelle ils croyent estre la pure vérité ? Car quel argument plus certain pour monstrier qu'ils le croyent, sinon qu'ils meurent obstinés en cette créance ? Ce seroit donc conscience bien grande de les condamner pour une religion qu'ils tiennent la vraye foy.

necessary that it should secure the credence which is attained by persuasion, not by force or constraint ; and this persuasion comes by the grace of God. . . . If then faith is implanted not by constraint, but voluntarily and of good accord, is it reasonable to punish him who cannot be persuaded that the thing preached to him is true religion ? When our Saviour Jesus Christ charges his apostles and disciples to declare the Gospel, he does not command them to force or constrain any man. There is no credit in doing a thing by force. Opinion is free ; and however we may force a man to do a thing against his will, we can never force him to believe that which he does not believe.”<sup>1</sup>

In this enthusiastic rebellion against the worn-out scholasticism of the Middle Ages, whereof the lawyers were the great leaders and champions, few of the common and natural illustrations of every-day life were permitted to escape the notice of these ingenious philosophers, who encroached upon the storehouse of the future as well as of the past. In a letter to a country gentleman of Anjou, M. de Réau, who had possibly supplied him, by act or by question, with a theme for his ingenuity, Nicholas Pasquier takes it in hand to consider the morality of the duel ; as J. J. Rousseau and many more have done in later days. He describes a combat of three against three, and supplements the catastrophe with a few words which fairly claim to be transferred from his pages to our own. He says—

“Consider how all these gentlemen go to the combat with

<sup>1</sup> “Le christianisme est un accident à l’homme, conséquemment il est besoin qu’il reçoive la foy laquelle se reçoit par la persuasion, non par force ou contrainte, et cette persuasion vient de la grâce de Dieu. . . . Donc si la foy ne se plante point par contrainte, mais volontairement et de plein gré, est-il raisonnable de punir celui qui ne se peut persuader que ce que l’on lui presche soit la vraie religion ? Quand Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ charge ses apostres et disciples d’annoncer l’Evangile, il ne leur commande point de forcer ou contraindre personne. Il n’y a point de mérite à faire une chose par force. L’opinion est libre, et combien que l’on puisse forcer un homme de faire chose contre sa volonté, toutefois il n’est pas possible de le contraindre de croire ce qu’il ne croit pas.”

cool patience, and to death with a savage heat. What fury, what rage, that this unbridled passion for a hand-to-hand contest, on account of a false and wretched point of honour, cannot be dissipated by fear of penalties nor by the hazard of life! Even the certain loss of their peace of soul cannot move these gentlemen from such a furious madness; it seems as though they had an antipathy to life; for they rush headlong into the perils of death, appealing from the judgment of the king's laws to the points of their swords. Their natural valour degenerates into a hateful brutality. That which they call honour is no honour, and that which they call courage is no courage. For my part, I think there is in these combats more of ambition, concealed by the hypocrisy of the sword, than of valour. Valour, strictly speaking, is the clear stamp of a judicious mind, equal and uniform throughout, which calmly recognises dangers without being troubled, and despises or surmounts them for some brave purpose, worthy the service of king or country."<sup>1</sup>

Others of the same brilliant group of magistrates, the fruits of whose scant leisure prove how much literature might have gained at their hands in happier times, were Robert Garnier, a dramatist, of whom we shall have further occasion to speak; Vauquelin de la Fresnaye,<sup>2</sup> a poet and satirist, to whom Boileau was indebted for part of his inspiration; Du Vair,<sup>3</sup> author of a *Traité de l'Eloquence française*; Michel de l'Hôpital, who deserved, as much as any of his contemporaries, the praise which Montaigne bestowed upon the cultivated public men of the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> He was a native of Auvergne and

<sup>1</sup> We only give the beginning of N. Pasquier's original.

"Considérez comment tous ces gentilshommes vont et avec une froide patience au combat, et avec une aspre chaleur à la mort. Quelle furie, quelle rage de dire que cette desbordée passion de combattre un à un, pour ce faux et malheureux point d'honneur, ne se puisse perdre par la terreur des peines, ni par les hazards de la vie! La privation mesme certaine du salut de l'âme ne peut desmouvoir les gentils hommes d'une phrenésie si enragée; il semble qu'ils aient leur vie à contre-cœur; car ils courent à bride abattue aux périls de la mort, appelant du jugement des ciliets du roy à la pointe de leurs épées pour s'agrandir.

<sup>2</sup> 1536-1607.

<sup>3</sup> 1556-1621.

<sup>4</sup> Belles armes frappées à l'antique marque.



passed his youth in exile, studying law under the great Italian professors at Padua, Bologna, and Rome. Returning to France, under the protection of the Cardinal de Grammont, with the prestige of a high reputation for scholarship and legal knowledge, he became successively a distinguished advocate, judge, and diplomatist ; and was finally, in 1560, promoted to the dignity of the Chancellorship. De l'Hôpital was no mere lawyer or statesman, successful by force of circumstances, and honoured for his success. He attained the highest position amongst that galaxy of learned and dignified servants of the state, of whom it has been said<sup>1</sup> that "France has produced nothing on which she ought to pride herself more highly than on this ancient magistrature, which, even under an absolute régime, preserved the image of liberty in the independence of justice." He did his best to guide the vessel of the state through the dangers and misfortunes which beset it during the infancy of Francis the Second and Charles the Ninth, and to maintain the honour of his country under the vacillating rule of their mother, Catherine de Medici, and the ruthless ambition of the Guises. If he did not succeed, it was only because he could not command success ; but at least he deserved it. Francis the Second, the first husband of Mary Stuart, died in the year of De l'Hôpital's elevation, and on the eve of the Assembly of Fontainebleau, where the Chancellor had convened the States-General. Listen to the firm and dignified manner in which he justified this attempted restoration of Parliamentary government in France, after his opponents had sought to make the death of the young king a pretext for setting aside the congress.

"The people have the privilege of approaching the person of their king, of making their complaints to him, of bringing to him their requests and obtaining needful remedies and provisions. . . . I say that there is no act so worthy of a king, and so

<sup>1</sup> Villemain, *Vie de l'Hôpital*.

becoming to him, as to hold parliaments, to give general audience to his subjects and do justice to all. Kings were chosen in the first instance to do justice, and to make war is not so royal an act as to do justice ; for tyrants and bad men make war as much as kings, and often enough the bad one makes it better than the good one. Thus upon the seal of France the figure of the king is not impressed in armour, and upon horseback, but sitting on his royal throne, dispensing justice. . . . How many acts of pillage, outrage, violence, injustice, committed upon the people, are concealed from kings, which, when they hold their parliaments, they can hear and comprehend ! These restrain kings from overburdening and weighing upon their people, from imposing new subsidies, from causing great and extraordinary expenditure, from selling office to unjust judges, from granting bishoprics and abbeys to unworthy men, and from endless other evils which, often through error, they commit ; for the majority of kings see only through the eyes of others, and, instead of leading others, allow themselves to be led by them. . . . That which we praise in a family should be thought good in a kingdom ; for there is nothing which so greatly pleases and satisfies the subject as to be known by and to be able to approach his prince. If the king could see all his people frequently and without difficulty, he would do well to see them and know them. It is probable that those who hold a contrary opinion speak more for themselves than for the prince. These are persons, it may be, who would rule and manage everything by themselves, according to their will and pleasure ; who dread lest their acts should be known by others, besieging the king, and taking care that no man shall approach him.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres Complètes*, i. p. 379, *et passim*. “ Le peuple a ce bonheur d’approcher de la personne de son roy, de luy faire des plaintes, luy présenter ses requestes et obtenir les remèdes et provisions nécessaires. . . . Je dis qu’il n’y a acte tant digne d’un roy, et tant propre à luy, que tenir les états, que donner audience générale à ses subjects et faire justice à chacun. Les roys ont été esleus premièrement pour faire la justice, et n’est acte aussi royal faire la guerre que faire justice ; car les tyrans et les mauvais font la guerre autant que les roys et bien souvent le mauvais la fait mieux que le bon. Aussi, dans le seal de France, n’est pas empreinte la figure du roy armé et à cheval, mais étant en son throsne royal, rendant et faisant la justice. . . . Combien de pauvretés, d’injures, de forces, d’injustices qui se font aux peuples, sont

This is but the exordium of a noble and impressive speech, in which the Chancellor counsels, persuades, or reproaches each party in turn, and in which he is not afraid to impress upon the fanatical religious combatants of the day, by whom France was being torn in pieces, counsels of moderation and tolerance. "Away," he cries, "with those devilish words, names of parties, factions, and seditions—Lutherans, Huguenots, Papists: let us not barter away the name of Christian."

We will come back to De l'Hôpital by and by; let us in the meanwhile turn aside to Pierre la Ramée,<sup>1</sup> or, as he preferred to latinise his name, Ramus. It was beneath the strokes of his trenchant blade, in particular, that the mouldering scholastic philosophy crumbled into ruins. His predecessors had done much to emancipate thought and style; he lent his powerful aid to enfranchise reason. His classical studies had done for him what he set himself to do for his generation. He was professor of eloquence and philosophy, and during his whole life, a martyr to his attempts at reformation. He wished to do in the scientific world what Luther and Calvin had done in the religious. He saw clearly all the faults and subtleties of Scholasticism, dared to attack Aristotle, to whom he opposed Plato and Socrates, and, above all, reason;

cachées aux roys, qu'ils peuvent ouyr et entendre tenant les estats! Cela retire les roys de trop charger et grever leur peuple, d'imposer nouveaux subsides, de faire grandes et extraordinaires despenses, de vendre offices à mauvais juges, de bailler eveschez et abbayes à genz indignes et d'autres infinis maulx, que souvent, par erreur, ils commettent; car la pluspart des roys ne veoyent que par les yeux d'aultruy, et au lieu qu'ils deussent mener les autres, se laissent mener. . . . Ce qui est loué en une famille doit estre trouvé bon en un royaume, car il n'y a rien qui tant plaise et contente le subject qu'estre cogneu et de pouvoir approcher de son prince. Si le roy pouvoit veoir tout son peuple souvent et sans son incommodité, ferait très-bien de le veoir et cognoistre. Il est vraysemblable que ceulx qui tiennent l'opinion contraire parlent plus pour eulx que pour le prince. Ce sont genz peut-être qui veulent seuls gouverner et conduire tout à leur vouloir et plaisir; qui craignent leurs faicts estre cogneus par aultres, assiégent le prince et gardent que nul approche de luy."

<sup>1</sup> 1515-1572. See M. Waddington's *Ramus, sa vie, ses écrits et ses opinions*.

and "bore without difficulty and even joyfully the storms of life, because he saw before him a more peaceful future ; and under the influence of a more humane philosophy, men who had become better, more civilised, and more enlightened." He wrote a great many works, which were all eagerly read in his time, became a reformer of spelling, was considered not alone one of the best classical scholars, but also the first mathematician of his time. He even founded a chair of mathematics at the *Collège Royal*, was one of the first adherents of the system of Copernicus, became a Protestant, and was finally murdered on St. Bartholomew's night.

Jacques Amyot<sup>1</sup> followed the steps of Ramus, and translated Plutarch. Under his hands the stilted yet philosophic style of the great historian assumed a modern form, at once graceful, philosophic, and effective. Montaigne aptly enough expresses the value of the boon which Amyot conferred upon his age. "We ignorant folk," he says, "were lost, if this book had not lifted us from the mire ; thanks to it, we dare at this moment both speak and write ; its ladies teach our schoolmasters ; it is our breviary."

Bodin<sup>2</sup> was amongst the most philosophical of those classical magistrates whose strength was rather in language than in philosophy. His own principal work, *Six Livres de la République*, belonged to that class, sufficiently numerous in every literature, which deals with the theory of government. Inspired by Plato, having, no doubt, the works of Aristotle continually before his eyes, he attempted to deduce from history and contemporary statecraft the ideal form of the state. He had doubtlessly read Machiavelli ; and his illustrations are drawn from Italy as well as from France ; from his own days as well as from the ancient annals of Greece and Rome. But he had what Machiavelli had not : a perception of the philosophy of history. He takes for his guide in his defini-

<sup>1</sup> 1530-1594

<sup>2</sup> 1530-1596.



tion of the laws of government, not simply the character of those who are to be governed, but the experience of rulers and subjects. His works are full of proofs of his penetration, judgment, and philosophical breadth; full also of evidence that the world's new philosophy was yet in its infancy. We find him in one place discussing the effect of climate upon the laws of nations; in another place gravely considering the weight to be attached to dreams and astral influences; and even in his *Démonomanie*, which treats about sorcerers, hinting that, like Socrates, he had a familiar demon, who pulled his right ear when he committed a good action, and his left when the contrary took place.

A clear proof that the age has not yet left its leading strings; though it may well be doubted if any age ever completely frees itself from superstitious trammels.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. THE REFORMATION.

POSSIBLY the most significant outcome of the Renaissance, and certainly the most powerful development of the intellectual revolution which distinguishes the sixteenth century, was the reformation of religion. The characteristic of the age was rebellion—rebellion of the spirit of man against the forms and grooves in which it had been endeavoured to cramp it—rebellion of the intellect against the formulas of tradition and the authority of mere didactic knowledge—rebellion of the soul against the conventional teachings and interpretations of a church distinguished more by tyranny and persecution than by intelligence and morality. The leaven of this latter revolt had indeed been working for many centuries in every country of Christendom, and in none more so than in France. To go no farther back than the thirteenth century, the Albigensian heretics and their merciless punishment bore witness to the vitality of independent religious belief within the pale of the Catholic Church. Over and over again the incipient rebellion displayed itself, only to be stamped out by the orthodox cruelty of God's vice-regent and his faithful tributaries. The followers of Valdo at Lyons, who had escaped the full fury of the Albigensian crusade, handed down their cherished freedom of faith from generation to generation; so that Luther was not without reason in tracing through this little community "the apostolic descent of a purer Christian faith." Rome had strangely overlooked the peril which per-

petually threatened her from this quiet corner of France; and it was not until 1540 that the Parliament of Aix turned its attention towards the ill-fated Waldenses. Nineteen of the most outspoken and influential were arraigned and condemned. Their property was confiscated, their houses destroyed, their bodies burned. The rest found protectors in Dubellay, Governor of Piedmont, and Sadolet, Bishop of Carpentras; Switzerland and several of the German States also interceded for them, and Francis the First for the moment stayed the persecution. But five years later, when the King was sick and senile, and had resigned himself to the guidance of his priests and his mistress, he listened to the false accusations which were brought against the peaceable mountaineers, and sanctioned the execution of a former sentence. A word sufficed. A ready instrument was found in the Baron de la Garde, who was despatched with some seven or eight thousand men to Mérindol, Cabrières, and the thirty villages in which the heretics had their homes. The resistance was slight or ineffectual, and according to de Thou, a contemporary historian, the whole district was laid waste.<sup>1</sup> Three thousand people were massacred in Cabrières, as many more were burnt or otherwise put to death, and the miserable remnant perished in the woods and mountains where they had sought refuge from their ruthless fellow-Christians. It is a sign of the times, important for the student of literature as well as of history, that the Catholic world received this massacre in the light of a holy judgment. It is true that Francis revolted against the cruelty committed in his name, and enjoined his son, Henry the Second, to inquire into the conduct of those who had so far exceeded his commands. The Parliament of Paris held no less than fifty

<sup>1</sup> 1545. The circumstances inspired Milton with one of the grandest of his sonnets, beginning thus:—

“Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold.”

meetings before it could come to a decision one way or another—a fact which attests both the obstinate courage of the champions of justice and freedom, and the extreme authority of the orthodox Catholic party. The advocate-general Guérin, who had apparently tampered with the King's decree, was condemned to death; but the President d'Oppède, and his fellow-murderers, who could hardly have been less guilty, were acquitted of blame.<sup>1</sup>

Can we need a more significant picture of the time?—a time in which the passions of men, excited to the last degree, found a sanction for the most terrible crimes in the religion of the gospel of love—a time in which the whole of western Europe was either plunged in religious civil war, or at least hesitating on the threshold—a time when kings balanced and alternated between the cause of religious liberty and the cause of Papal supremacy; when Germany, the scene of religious conflict, became finally the first powerful champion and bulwark of the Reformation, and when France, after no less constant and desperate struggles, ended by appearing as the champion of the Holy See. It was an age in which the Church of Rome needed all the energy and all the ability of her supporters, and that not only on the field of battle, but in the cloister, in the pulpit, and on the hearth. It has been the glory and the salvation of the Papal authority that it has never stood long in need of resolute and efficient defenders, and that in the darkest hours of its fortune it has ever found deliverance by its own vitality. In the year 1540—the year in which the first condemnation of the Waldenses marked the inauguration of a more intensely militant attitude in the French Catholics—was founded the Society of Jesus; just as, three centuries before, in the midst of the Albigensian crusade, was established the hardly more formidable engine of the Inquisition.

<sup>1</sup> 1550, five years after the commission of the crime.



With the death of Henry the Second of France,<sup>1</sup> who had favoured the Protestants of Germany, at the same time that he rendered assistance to the Popes against Catholic Spain and England, the era of foreign religious war gave place to a sanguinary era of civil war between the parties of the Church and of the Huguenots. Henry had but gratified his dynastic ambition in encouraging the Lutherans against Charles the Fifth of Germany ; but in his own country he had shown no great tenderness to the Reformers. He hated the Calvinists, as Tavannes points out,<sup>2</sup> more on grounds of statecraft than of religion, fearing lest they should receive foreign aid against himself, as the Lutheran princes had received it against the Emperor. In 1557 he sanctioned the introduction of the Inquisition—"the only ram," said Pope Paul IV., "with which heresy can be beaten down." It was too late, however, to do throughout France what had so easily been effected in Provence. One half of the nobility, one tenth of the people, and a considerable party amongst the clergy, were secretly attached to the principles of the Reformation.<sup>3</sup> The indecision of Francis the First and Henry the Second had endured too long, and had given too free scope to reason and satire. During the later years of Henry's reign, the progress of the Huguenots had been extremely rapid. In 1555 there was not a single public place of worship in France. When the king died there were at least two thousand. At this time the opinions of Calvin were openly professed by such notable men as the two Bourbon princes,—Antoine de Vendôme,<sup>4</sup> who through his marriage with Jeanne d'Albret, had become King of Navarre and Prince of Béarn, and Louis, Prince of Condé,<sup>5</sup>—and by the three nephews of Montmorency, the Admiral de Coligny,<sup>6</sup> his elder brother the Cardinal de Châtillon,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1559.<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Jean de Saulx de Tavannes*, ch. xx.<sup>3</sup> Lavallée, *Histoire des Français*, vol. ii. sect. 5, ch. i.<sup>4</sup> 1518-1562.<sup>5</sup> 1530-1569. Between the two came Charles, Cardinal de Bourbon (1520-1590), who adhered to the ancient faith.<sup>6</sup> 1517-1572.<sup>7</sup> 1515-1571.

and his younger brother François.<sup>1</sup> Even the Parliaments, as we have seen, inclined from time to time to the Reformed party, and religious liberty, if not religious revolt, found its apologists amongst the most famous magistrates of the country, in the persons of de l'Hôpital, Dumoulin, and men of like influence and courage.

Francis the Second was barely sixteen when he ascended the throne in 1559. The reins of government were immediately seized by the Duke de Guise<sup>2</sup> and the Cardinal de Lorraine,<sup>3</sup> grandsons of René II. of Lorraine, and consequently the uncles of Mary Stuart, who had been espoused to Francis during the lifetime of his father. These, with the sanction of the queen-mother, Catherine de Medici, dismissed the great officers of state who were known to lean towards the Reformed opinions, and rigorously enforced the late king's edicts against the heretics. Only one thing more was needed to exasperate to the last degree the hostility of the two great parties into which France was now divided. A flood of violent pamphlets was poured over the whole country, some few of which bore the names of the writers, whilst the majority were anonymous. All harped upon the minority of the king. One or two merely demanded that the government should be entrusted to the princes of the blood, or that the States-General should be assembled; and de l'Hôpital, as has been seen, presently attempted to apply this natural remedy to the evils under which the kingdom laboured. Others frankly condemned the ambition of the Guises, and even went so far as to demand their death. The foreign extraction of the Duke and the Cardinal<sup>4</sup> assisted in aggravating the discontent excited by their harsh exercise of the royal prerogatives. In March 1560 a considerable force of insurgents marched against Paris; they were routed, and all taken with

<sup>1</sup> 1521-1569.

<sup>2</sup> 1519-1563.

<sup>3</sup> 1524-1754.

<sup>4</sup> Their father, Claude, was born in Lorraine.

arms in their hands were treated without mercy. "For several days, without trial, and under the eyes of the king, the prisoners were hung, drowned, beheaded; the blood ran in a stream along the streets; the Loire was covered with corpses. The executions only ceased at the prayer of the queen-mother, who delivered and set free a large number of conspirators."<sup>1</sup> Condé and Coligny, who had been amongst the secret fomenters of the outbreak, stoutly denied complicity in it, but they lost no time in withdrawing from the court. In the meantime, Catherine de Medici had grown continually more cool and distrustful towards the Duke and his brother. It was her influence which preserved Condé from the scaffold in the last few days of her eldest son's life;<sup>2</sup> and when to the latter succeeded his younger brother Charles IX.—a boy of ten years of age—she summoned back to court the leaders of the liberal party, and ostensibly took the Huguenots under her protection.

If there was one man in France who, by his moderation, his good sense, his superiority to the passions of his time, could have allayed those passions and found a peaceful issue from the crisis, it was de l'Hôpital, whom Catherine now made her chancellor and confidential minister. The States-General discussed the affairs of the country with comparative calmness, and did not separate without guaranteeing the free exercise of the Reformed religion in France. In the same year (1561) a national council was summoned at Poissy. This council, from which Catherine and de l'Hôpital expected such grand results, was attended by the whole court, by numerous advocates of the Reformed faith, including Théodore de Beza, the friend and disciple of Calvin, by the Cardinal de Lorraine, and by many orthodox bishops. Catherine had previously written to ask from the Pope the suppression of images, communion in two kinds, prayers in the vulgar

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Michel de Castelnau*, bk. i. ch. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1560.

tongue, with other concessions, alleging in her letter<sup>1</sup> that "it is impossible to bring back, either by arms or by laws, those who have separated from the Roman Church, so great is their number, so powerful are they by reason of the nobles and magistrates who have embraced their cause, so well is it united, and so much strength does it acquire day by day." The Pope was shocked by such a petition, and sent his legate to attend the council. Moderation marked the conference at its outset, but it was only too manifest how little hope there could be in such an expedient. It was not long before Beza scandalised the Romanists by saying that "Christ, in the eucharist, was as far from the bread and wine as heaven from earth." The bishops cried blasphemy on the heretical opinion; and Lainé, general of the Jesuits, who had accompanied the legate from Rome, protested against the council as being held without the sanction of the Pope. To end the violent disputes which thereafter arose, the conference was dissolved. But the Catholic party was now thoroughly alarmed; reconciliation was completely out of the question, and in March 1562 the civil war began. The whole of France was in arms, and the literary annals of the remainder of the century will sufficiently attest its violence and its importance.

## § 2. CALVIN AND HIS FRIENDS.

Throughout the earlier stages of the religious struggle going on in France at that time, Calvin,<sup>2</sup> from his retirement at Geneva, had exercised a powerful personal influence, exciting the people by his writings, by his frequent letters, by his emissaries, by an organisation, in short, which—all due allowance being made for the difference of the epochs and of the causes—might give grounds for an apt parallel between

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, *Historiarum sui temporis*, lib. xxviii.

<sup>2</sup> 1509-1564.



himself and Mazzini. Both these men were firebrands by disposition and inclination ; both fought for a cause which they considered the highest and noblest of all possible causes—the one for religious and the other for civil liberty ; both were constrained to work in exile ; both subordinated means to ends ; both went to the length of calling in the sword to redress the balance of popular freedom. In both, zeal outran discretion. Mazzini did not die, like Calvin, in exile ; but if Calvin had found his Garibaldi, he might perhaps have died in his native Noyon a happier and a more contented man than the arch-conspirator of the Italian Revolution.

Rabelais called his contemporary “*le démoniaque de Genève* ;” and there was, indeed, little in common between the Democritus and the Mazzini of the sixteenth century. In the quality of satire they were both true sons of Gaul ; but how different even in their one point of resemblance. Calvin was cold, morose, stern, implacable, and used his power of raillery with the same ruthless and unrelenting animosity with which he employed every other weapon wherewith he could injure his foes. Satire without a smile is perhaps the nearest approach to outward feeling which we find recorded of the hypochondriac reformer of Geneva. The son of a procureur-fiscal, he was destined for the church ; was at twelve years a chaplain ; was one of the best classical scholars then known, and even not unacquainted with Hebrew. He went to study law, and became a disciple of Alciati. He retained to the last all the shrewdness, the logical rigour, the contemptuous obstinacy and self-reliance of an unimpassioned lawyer. His creed once fashioned and shaped, his party chosen or created, there was for him no possibility of a rival, a distraction, a doubt, a hesitation. When poor, he sold his books, and wrote instead of reading ; when banished, he wrote on still, and moved his country more deeply from exile than at home ; when sick, nervous, rheumatic, he clung to his pen,

and covered thousands of folios—so intense was his need to communicate himself to his generation and to posterity. His sermons amount to two thousand. If his letters had been collected, as we are wont to collect the letters of our dead, they would have filled scores of bulky volumes. Francis the First, Henry the Second, Edward the Sixth of England, Antony of Navarre, Marguerite de Valois, the Duchess of Ferrara, Coligny, Condé, Luther, Melancthon, Beza, Cranmer, John Knox ; these are but a handful amongst the recipients of his exhortations, expostulations, and encouragements. His burning zeal knew no solace except in the effort to make his belief the belief of the whole world ; his interpretation of Christianity the rule and guide of the Christian Church. No wonder that such a life as this was a short one. He did not long survive the outbreak of the religious civil war in France, dying at the age of fifty-five in his exile at Geneva.

This Pope of the Reformation, supreme and infallible by his own conviction and the assent of his disciples, who borrowed Rome's method for propagating his creed, even to the extent of procuring the death of a brother-reformer, Servetus, at the stake, had little charity to spare for those who refused to accept his own opinions. His faith was cruel and uncompromising, and he virtually pronounced his own infallibility as a dogma, in the hope that all the world might be compelled to accept that faith as its own. He believed in a God fashioned in Calvin's image, who condemned—who had predestined to condemnation—such as would not recognise the justice of his decrees, even though these decrees had created evil, had prepared a hell, had closed heaven upon an infinite number of eternal souls ages before they had come into existence. He took the half-realised conceptions of the mild Augustine, and shaped them into stern and uncompromising dogmas—not satisfied with his new version of the Gospel until he had demonstrated that the good man is in duty bound

to hate the reprobate, "in order to conform himself to the will of the God who condemned them." Such was the apotheosis of religious hatred preached to mankind in the dawn of its new life by a perversely enlightened and conspicuously logical Frenchman. Such was the teaching of the eloquent and persuasive exile of Geneva, as set forth with all the terseness and clearness of a scientific treatise in the *Institution Chrétienne*, written when its author was barely twenty-six, with all the ardent intemperance of youth—insisted on to the end of his life with all the obstinate tenacity and persistence of age.

This *Christian Institution*, or instruction, is dedicated to Francis the First, whose attention is frankly invited to "a kind of summary of the very doctrine which many think ought to be punished with prison, banishment, and proscription." The banishment and proscription thus distinctly invited were, in fact, the lot of the writer; but, if he had expected his fate, he was not the man to shrink from it. He fully felt what he subsequently expressed in one of his letters: "I am assured, in the first place, that God has me in His holy keeping; and, in the second place, that, if it please Him that we should suffer, I would gladly die for him." Meanwhile he lived; and if, in the warfare which he had undertaken, it fell to his lot to decree the time and cause for others to die, he could do this with an equally confident assurance that he did it in the service and in the name of God.

This same dedication is worthy of perusal, and suffices better than any other part of the work to display the man as he actually lived and wrote.<sup>1</sup> His book, he says, is intended to serve for the instruction of those whom he designed to teach, and also as a confession of his faith before the king.

<sup>1</sup> At the same time it is in the letters of Calvin that we must naturally look for the most satisfactory picture of his mind, for his endless activity and zeal, and for his bitter vein of satire.

"It is for you, sire, not to turn away your ears or your resolution from so just a defence, especially when so great a matter is in question—namely, how the glory of God shall be maintained on the earth, how his truth shall preserve its honour and dignity, how the kingdom of Christ shall endure in its entirety. A question truly worthy of your ears, of your authority, of your royal throne! For this thought constitutes a true king, if he recognise that he is the very minister of God in the government of his kingdom; and on the other hand he who does not rule with the view to subserve the glory of God exercises no rule, but a brigandage. For it is a self-deceit to expect a long prosperity in a kingdom which is not governed by the sceptre of God; that is of his Holy Word. . . . Nor ought you to be diverted by contempt for our littleness. Of a verity we acknowledge freely enough that we are poor and meet for contempt; that is to say, before God miserable sinners, before man despised and made low; and even (if you will), the filth and offscouring of the world, or whatever more vile can yet be named. So that there remains for us nothing wherewith to glorify ourselves before God, except his pity alone, by the which, without any merit, we are saved: nor before man, except our weakness, to wit, that which all consider a great cause of shame. . . . Our doctrine is not our own but that of the living God and of his Christ, whom the Father has made king, to rule from one sea to the other, and from the rivers to the ends of the world; and so to rule that, by smiting the world with the very tip of his mouth, he breaks it with his glory and power like a potter's vessel."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "C'est vostre office, sire, de ne destourner ne vos oreilles, ne vostre courage d'une si juste defense, principalement quand il est question de si grande chose: c'est assavoir comment la gloire de Dieu sera maintenue sur terre: comment sa vérité retiendra son honneur et dignité; comment le règne de Christ demeurera en son entier. O matière digne de vos oreilles, digne de vostre jurisdiction, digne de vostre throne royal! Car ceste pensee fait un vray roy, s'il se reconnoist estre vray ministre de Dieu au gouvernement de son royaume; et au contraire celui qui ne regne point à ceste fin de servir à la gloire de Dieu, n'exerce pas regne, mais brigandage. Or en s'alarme si on attend longue prosperité en un règne qui n'est point gouverné du sceptre de Dieu, c'est-à-dire sa sainte parole. . . . Et ne devez estre destourbé par le contemnement de nostre petitesse. Certes nous reconnoissons assez combien nous sommes pauvres gens et de mépris: c'est assavoir, devant Dieu, misé-



Here was the dignity of faith asserting and magnifying itself before the dignity of royalty ; an assertion couched in terms of almost abject humility, and yet flaming with the covert satire of a literary giant. Here, too, was a force and concision of language never before heard in France ; a style vigorous by its very simplicity and sobriety, which was the genuine outcome of the Renaissance, owing the least part of its strength to the classical models, and yet in itself classical and a model to all who came after. The influence of Calvin's writings upon the style of his successors, and upon the literary development of his country, cannot easily be overestimated. With him French prose may be said to have attained its manhood ; the best of his contemporaries, and of those who had preceded him, did but use as a staff or as a toy that which he employed as a burning sword. Such indeed was the device on the title-page of the first edition of his *Institution* ; and it was in every way appropriate to its character and to his own. The force and the fire were the measure of the man ; his language was vehement because he was vehement, and its power was but the expression of his own powerful intellect. Calvin speaks as he writes ; and to read his words was for his contemporaries the same thing as to listen to him. The lofty and serious prose of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries bears his mark visibly impressed upon it ; and not only upon its style but upon its method

rables pécheurs, envers les hommes, vilipendez et déjettez ; et mesmes (si vous voulez) l'ordure et ballieure du monde, ou si on peut encore nommer quelque chose de plus vile. Tellement qu'il ne nous reste rien de quoy nous glorifier devant Dieu, sinon sa seule miséricorde, par laquelle, sans quelque mérite, nous sommes sauvés : ny envers les hommes, sinon nostre infirmité, c'est-à-dire ce que tous estiment grande ignominie . . . Nostre doctrine n'est pas nostre, mais de Dieu vivant et de son Christ, lequel le Père a constitué roy, pour dominer d'une mer à l'autre et depuis les fleuves jusques aux fins de la terre ; et tellement dominer qu'en frappant la terre de la seule verge de sa bouche, il la casse toute avec sa gloire et sa force comme un pot de terre."

and argument. For the *Christian Institution* was the first French work of importance which prominently displayed the severe logical reasoning, well sustained and clearly enunciated, which has ever since distinguished the national French literature. What Villehardouin and Joinville did for history, Calvin did for theology ; and more, for he not only showed his countrymen how to treat the most elevated of all themes, but he gave them at the outset a masterpiece and a model.

Calvin was, from his youth upwards, in bad health, and his portrait shows a fleshless countenance, a peaked beard, and a gloomy though determined aspect. To show that he had definitely broken with the Roman Catholic Church, he married, in the year 1540, Idelette de Bure, the widow of an Anabaptist whom he had converted. She died, after having been married nine years, and on her deathbed Calvin reminded her of her children by her first husband. "I have already recommended them to the Lord," she replied. "And also to me?" said he. "I know," was her dying answer, "that you will not abandon children who are recommended to the Lord." These trusting words of his wife characterise the man to whom they were addressed. Theodore de Beza, in describing Calvin's own deathbed, says that his want of breath prevented his speaking, so that his prayers were rather sighs than intelligible words, but "accompanied by such a look and in a manner so composed, that his glance alone showed by what faith and hope he was strengthened."<sup>1</sup>

Theodore de Beza,<sup>2</sup> who has already been mentioned as a friend and disciple of Calvin, was ten years his junior. His earliest work was a volume of Latin poetry, *Juvenilia*, distinguished rather by delicacy than by morality. He appears to have been one of those who were won over by the eloquence

<sup>1</sup> Calvin's complete works were published at Geneva in twelve enormous folio volumes, and were reprinted in 1617. They have been translated and published in English by the Calvin Society.

<sup>2</sup> 1519-1605.

of his master not only from the vanities of the world but from the ranks of the Romanists. Settling in Geneva, he was soon recognised as Calvin's most worthy and trustworthy lieutenant; and, subsequently, as his natural successor in the leadership of the French Reformation. He was for some time a professor of Greek at Lausanne, and to the last he maintained the elegance and classical spirit of his earlier writings. Witness the generous tribute which he paid to his dead master. "On that day the sun went to sleep, and the greatest light in this world for the service of the Church of God was drawn back into heaven. On the next night and the following day," he adds, "there was great weeping throughout the town; for the prophet of the Lord was no more." Beza produced many controversial works, and assisted in a Latin translation of the Bible, which was used by the Protestants in place of the Vulgate. In his polemical writings he closely approximated to the vehemence, not to say the violence, of Calvin. After presiding at the Synod of Rochelle, at which a union was effected amongst the several Reformed churches, he died at the age of eighty-six, early in the seventeenth century. He was the historian of the Reformation in France, having left behind him a *Histoire Ecclesiastique des Eglises Réformées au Royaume de France*.

Beza was more than the champion of the Calvinists, he was also a reformer in literature, and one of those who contributed greatly to the classical Renaissance. Yet he knew where to stop. He recommended the classics as models to study, but said at the same time that one ought not to imitate those authors who, "thinking to enrich our language, deck it out in the Greek and Roman fashion." Purely classical in his own style, he used his talents chiefly to spread the religious principles in which he believed. He wrote, amongst other works, a religious tragedy, *Le Sacrifice d'Abraham*, after the Greek models, which remains as a

proof of his correct classical taste. It is somewhat in the style of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. We give a few lines from the monologue of Abraham, on the point of killing his son—

“ Let another be the slayer of my son !  
 Alas ! Lord, must this hand  
 Deal this too cruel blow ?  
 Alas ! what shall I say to the mourning mother  
 If she hears of this violent death ? ”<sup>1</sup>

Let us give one example of De Beza's love for his fatherland — that land which he was forbidden to enter — by quoting the following lines, so full of feeling and resignation, which he wrote whilst at Geneva.

“ O God ! if you wish,  
 I know that you can  
 Take me from here ;  
 But if, for the present,  
 You wish me to remain,  
 I wish it also.  
 Farewell, France, farewell,  
 Which is the spot  
 Where first  
 I came into the world,  
 And which first heard  
 My feeble wail.  
 O my darling country,  
 I die far from you.  
 And that willingly,  
 Because within you, O France !  
 Have taken up their abode  
 The murderers of the saints.

<sup>1</sup> Qu'un autre soit de mon fils meurtrier !  
 Hélas ! Seigneur, faut-il que cette main  
 Vienne à donner ce coup trop inhumain !  
 Las ! que diray-je à la mère dolente,  
 Si elle entend cette mort violente ?



Farewell, united hearts  
 Of the poor banished,  
 Who alone in these times,  
 In spite of all envy,  
 Pass your life  
 Happy and satisfied."<sup>1</sup>

Farel<sup>2</sup> and Viret<sup>3</sup> have also to be classed among the literary reformers; but whatever may have been their influence in the field of theology, they made no mark in that of literature. We leave them to that oblivion to which they are condemned by posterity.

<sup>1</sup> "O Dieu, si tu veux,  
 Je sais que tu peux  
 Me tirer d'ici;  
 Mais si pour cette heure  
 Veux que je demeure,  
 Je le veux aussi.  
 Adieu, France, adieu,  
 Qui êtes le lieu  
 Qui, premièrement,  
 Au monde me vîtes,  
 Et premier ouïtes  
 Mon gémissment.

<sup>2</sup> 1489-1565.

O mon pays doux !  
 Je meurs loin de vous,  
 Voire et volontiers,  
 Puis qu'en vous, ô France !  
 Font leur demeure  
 Des saints les meurtriers.  
 Adieu, cœurs unis  
 Des pauvres bannis,  
 Qui, seuls en ce temps,  
 Malgré toute envie  
 Passez votre vie  
 Heureux et contents!"

<sup>3</sup> 1511-1571.

## II.

FROM THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE UNTIL  
THE END OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV.



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## BOOK IV.

### THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. THE LEAGUE AND THE JESUITS.

THE mighty flood of new ideas, inventions, restorations, emancipations of thought and belief, which flowed in upon the human mind as soon as the Renaissance had broken down the accumulated obstructions of the Middle Ages, was not permitted to advance without many a check and hindrance. The jealousy of scholasticism, which saw the very foundations of its pseudo-ancient learning undermined; the hatred of the Church, whose power and influence were threatened by the revindication of reason and private judgment; the tyranny of constituted authorities, who were not slow to catch the contagion of fear, and listened eagerly to the timid counsels of their advisers—these, as we have seen, set their faces against every manifestation and development of the spirit of innovation, and succeeded only too often in their crusade of suppression. Of all the engines employed in this war against light and liberty the most effective was found in the Society of Jesus, which, by a decree of Parliament,<sup>1</sup> was authorised to open its schools and lecture-rooms independently of the Universities. The Jesuits, faithful to the genius of their founder, who despatched his missionaries into France in the

<sup>1</sup> March 29th, 1565.

year 1559, adopted a plan calculated above all others to ensure success. Discouraging the study of the Bible as unnecessary or even dangerous to the young and ill-educated, they disarmed the suspicions of their pupils by setting before them classical mythology and literature; themselves presiding over the study, after first preparing the very textbooks and lexicons. It was not long before all the principal towns in the country had their flourishing classical schools, in which the followers of Loyola professed to initiate the young into all that was valuable in the new and the ancient learning. Pasquier, one of the ablest of their opponents, does not underrate the force of "their erudition interwoven with religion,"<sup>1</sup> nor was it possible that they who knew how to avail themselves of such a force in such an age should fail to reap a considerable triumph. The most assiduous and redoubtable of Loyola's disciples in France was Edmond Auger,<sup>2</sup> the confessor of Henry III., educated at the College in Rome, who earned for himself the cognomen of "the French Chrysostom." His catechism was widely used throughout the country, and his sermons, of which we possess but meagre illustrations, served to keep the zeal of his vast audiences at fever heat, and brought many Huguenots to the stake, although they spared his life when he was taken at Valence by the cruel chief of partisans, the Baron des Adrets.

Another powerful instrument of obscurantism employed with terrible effect against the reformers, and still intimately concerned with the literature of the Renaissance, was the Catholic League, an association of which the first branch was formed at Toulouse, and sanctioned by the local parliament, just before the conclusion of peace at Amboise, in 1563.<sup>3</sup> Blaise de Montluc was chosen for its chief. There were

<sup>1</sup> L'érudition et la religion tout ensemble.

<sup>2</sup> 1530-1591.

<sup>3</sup> It is at this point that the *Histoire Ecclésiastique* of Theodore de Beza terminates.

allied with him the Cardinals Strozzi and d'Armagnac, with other ecclesiastics and soldiers, and all who refused to join their ranks were declared "rebels and disobedient to the king." The peace was of short duration, and with the renewal of hostilities the League became a strong and formidable society. Similar confraternities sprang up in that and the succeeding years in various parts of France, and as their object was the same, they soon fell, nominally or virtually, under a single head, looking to the estates of Guienne and Languedoc for their direction, and to Montluc as their leader. The land was on fire, and it was in vain for wise and patriotic statesmen like the Chancellor de l'Hôpital to attempt its pacification. His celebrated Ordinance of Moulins, in which he seeks to enforce upon the local administrations the due discharge of their impartial functions, and lays down, in eighty-six elaborate and well-considered articles, the principles of justice and municipal privilege, was warmly discussed in Parliament; and, though it was confirmed after many weeks of party recriminations and protests, it remained for years little more than a dead letter. In point of fact, it is one of the grandest monuments of French jurisprudence; and if it failed to effect at the time what its author had ventured to hope from it, this was only because men's minds were blinded by passion, and deaf to everything except the religious animosities into which the persecuting zeal of the Church had plunged them. L'Hôpital recognised at last that he was not equal to his mission of pacification. He quitted his post in despair; and a contemporary puts the finishing stroke to the portrait of this noble and lofty-minded patriot when he describes how the old man, stroking his long white beard, exclaimed: "After this snow has melted, there will remain nothing but mud."<sup>1</sup>

Numerous and active as the "holy leagues" or "leagues

<sup>1</sup> Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. ix. p. 261.



of the Holy Spirit" had become in Languedoc, Guienne, Burgundy, Champagne, and other French provinces, it was not until the year 1576 that the great League of Picardy was founded, by d'Humières, governor of Péronne, and a large number of "prelates, *sieurs*, gentlemen, captains, soldiers, and residents in the towns and plains" of that province, one object whereof was to unite for combined action all the scattered Catholic Leagues in the country. The articles of association of the League of Picardy enumerate the reasons and purposes of its formation, some of which are significant enough as read by the light of history, and bear witness to the vigour and resolution of these powerful barons and prelates, before whom the king himself learned to tremble. Let us quote but half-a-dozen of the twelve articles as they have been handed down to us in the contemporary chronicle of De La Popelinière :—<sup>1</sup>

"The association is called into existence, and shall be constituted . . .

"2. To preserve the king, Henry III., by the grace of God, and the most Christian kings, his successors, in the state, glory, authority, service, and obedience which are due to them from their subjects, as it is contained in the articles which shall be presented to the States, which he swears and promises to keep at his consecration and coronation, declaring that he will do nothing to the prejudice of what shall be ordained by the said States.

"3. To restore to the provinces of this kingdom and the States thereof the ancient rights and dignities, franchises and liberties, such as they were from the time of King Clovis, the first Christian king, and such as are still better and more profitable, if any are to be found under the above-named protection.

"4. In case there shall be hindrance, opposition, or revolt against that which is hereinbefore included, by whom and from what part soever they shall arise, the said associates shall be

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire des Troubles et Guerres civiles en France pour le fait de la religion, depuis 1555 jusqu'en 1581. La Rochelle, 1581, 2 vols.*

bound to employ their whole property and means, and even their own persons, to the death, to punish, chastise, and fall foul of those who shall have attempted to restrain and hinder them. . . .

"8. All the Catholics of the towns and villages shall be secretly warned and summoned by the several governors to enter the said association, and duly to furnish arms and men for the carrying out of the same, according to the power and ability of each.

"9. They who will not enter the said association shall be reputed as enemies of the same, and liable to every kind of attack and molestation."

And the formula of oath was as follows :—

"12. I swear by God the Creator, touching this Gospel, and under pain of anathema and everlasting damnation, that I have entered this holy Catholic association according to the form of the compact which has here been read to me, loyally and sincerely, whether to command therein or to obey; and I promise, on my life and my honour, to continue therein to my last drop of blood, without opposition thereto or withdrawal therefrom, by reason of any command, pretext, excuse, or occasion whatever."

The leagues of the Huguenots were less stringent and exacting in their character than the articles here quoted, which, when sternly carried out, as in many instances they were, must be considered worthy of any secret society in any age. It is observable that the primary object of the associations, on one side and on the other, is stated to be the preservation and vindication of ancient rights and liberties; but, in the light of the document here referred to, it is impossible to maintain that this characteristic phenomenon of the sixteenth century was the mere outcome of a popular enthusiasm for liberty, or for the defence of municipal privileges, however much these latter may have been threatened, or however highly they may have been valued. The leagues of the Roman Catholics, though professedly based on attachment to liberty, and asserting a defensive rather than an offensive policy, were

clearly instigated by hatred of the Protestants, and by a determination to destroy them. The Protestant leagues, on the other hand, were more essentially defensive, and the leaders of the Huguenots, particularly after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, were citizens below the rank of the nobility.

The Roman Catholic League played a leading part in the religious wars of this period, but the complete organisation proposed by the nobles of Picardy was never actually attained. Amiens was the first important city to refuse obedience to d'Humières and his colleagues, and the king, at first overawed, drew courage from this refusal to withstand the embarrassing advances of his professed friends. The jealousy between the debauched and childless king, Henry III., and his arrogant Roman Catholic nobles widened year by year; and matters were still further complicated by the fact that the king's nearest of kin, Henry of Navarre, presumptive heir to the throne, was a professed Huguenot. In 1585 we find the League on the point of taking up arms against the monarch; and its manifesto, issued on this occasion, whilst alleging such general grievances as one might expect from the leaders of a democratic revolt, is evidently inspired by repugnance against the Protestant succession. It was, in fact, Henry of Navarre rather than the king who stood face to face with the army of the League, the weak monarch himself vacillating between the two parties, but finally casting in his lot with the Roman Catholics. He revoked the edicts of toleration which he had formerly granted, and thus precipitated the civil war which presently devastated France anew, and all but resulted in her dismemberment.

The issue of this long religious struggle was not attained until Henry of Navarre, triumphant on the battlefield, but unable to conquer the stern resolution of his religious enemies, renounced Protestantism, and consented to become a tool where he could not be supreme. Then the war was at an end, and the Roman Catholic States-general as a political

party sank, through mere lassitude and indifference, beneath the superior ambition and astuteness of Papal intriguers. They remodelled their oath, substituting the Pope for a leader taken from their own body, and the League was virtually at an end.<sup>1</sup>

## § 2. INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS DISSENSIONS ON LITERATURE.

The war of the pen accompanied the war of the sword; the intellect kept pace with all the marches and counter-marches of human ambition and rivalry. The literature of the time is the reflex of its external history, and the annals of each are filled with episodes of the other. No phase of French history exhibits this natural and necessary interdependence more clearly than the one whose outlines we have been thus lightly tracing, for in many instances the actors on either stage are identical. Rather let us say that on the one stage of human history are to be found impersonators who fill a double rôle, who are present in almost every scene, and whose absence would cause a double blank in the enacted drama. Let it not be supposed that the sheathing of the sword brought an end to the contest which had raged so terribly during more than one generation; the pen carried on the controversy with at least equal bitterness. After the change of religion of Henry IV. there were at least three parties in the convulsed and distracted country, whose mutual rage refused to be pacified;—the Huguenots, almost annihilated as they were by the massacre of St. Bartholomew; the king, protected and championed by the Church; and the half-effete League, which could not with a good grace accept a relapsed Protestant as its monarch, and which had, in fact, become gradually more democratic in its tendencies through long reliance upon the popular elements for its recruits.



Let us turn from political to social and literary aspects ; for not otherwise shall we succeed in gaining a satisfactory idea of this portentous phenomenon of the sixteenth century. Fostered by the intrigues of all the Roman Catholic countries of Europe, carefully nursed for their own purposes by the Duke of Guise and his fellow-nobles, the League undoubtedly had its origin in the religious enthusiasm of the masses of France, who were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. A strong reaction had set in against the teaching of Calvin and his disciples, and the public opinion of the country was fairly roused against the Huguenots. Diametrically opposed to the public opinion of Germany and England, which thoroughly endorsed the principles of the reformed faith, this instinctive fidelity of Frenchmen to the old religion, encouraged as it was by the preaching of the Jesuits and the authority of the Sorbonne, caught fire from the eloquence of the pulpit, and inflamed the country from one end to the other. The seed sown by Auger and his fellow-emissaries from the Society of Jesus rapidly bore fruit ; and the victories reaped by the several leagues in their earlier days were even eclipsed by the victories of the tongue and pen. Jean Boucher, Rose, bishop of Senlis, Canon Launay, who had been a Protestant himself, Prévôt, Pelletier, Guincestre, Hamilton, Cueilly, were amongst the first and the most famous of a numerous company of orators who have become known under the name of *Prédicateurs de la Ligue*. Their rhetoric stung the people into fury, and kept at fever-heat the zealous orthodoxy and persecuting rage of the Catholic mob, not only in the capital but throughout the provinces. They did not spare the highest and most powerful men in the kingdom, as often as they deemed them hostile or even lukewarm in matters of faith and practice. Whether they cried for vengeance on the assassins of the Guises, or, like Boucher, declared that the time was come to take the sickle in hand and mow down the Parliament, or spoke of the "blood-letting" of St. Bartholo-

mew, or, like Guincestre, apostrophised the president de Harlay from the pulpit, and forced him to raise his hand in token of a vow to be avenged on their enemies, they set no bounds of fear or prudence to the burning eloquence which consumed them. In the ardour of their political partisanship they forgot the Gospel of Christ, and accustomed their hearers to the absorbing sensationalism of the civil war. Twice a day, in most of the churches of Paris, harangues of this description were preached to overflowing congregations ; and as for their style, one of them was compared by a contemporary, l'Estoile, to "an enraged fishwife." But, in style, one must not omit to take success into consideration ; and the preachers of the League were successful with a vengeance. No wonder if Henry IV. allowed himself to exclaim, "All my troubles come from the pulpit !" The officious eloquence of the monk Christin, charged by the Sixteen<sup>1</sup> of Paris to communicate to the people the news of their reverse at Ivry, often as it has been related, deserves to be told once again. He went into the pulpit, and selected for his text the words, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." He began by describing the loved ones of God, insinuating that they who heard him were at all events amongst the number. That being so, they must look for chastisement at the hands of their God. And here, by a preconcerted signal, a messenger entered the church and delivered a missive to the preacher. Christin opened and read it ; and raising his hands to heaven he declared that God had made him a prophet. And so he related the news of the disaster. On this foundation he worked upon the feelings of his audience, until he had moved

<sup>1</sup> The Sixteen, *les Seize*, was the name given to a counsel of citizens, chosen in the sixteen quarters of Paris, who played a very considerable part during the troubles of the League. In 1587 they published a violent manifesto, and exercised great influence until 1591, when the Duke of Mayenne had several of them hanged, in retaliation for the hanging of a president of the parliament and two counsellors.

them from sorrow to renewed enthusiasm, and converted every coward into a possible hero.<sup>1</sup>

It will be manifest from the cursory review which we have taken of the political and social conditions of the religious upheaval of France in the sixteenth century that the pulpit was considered, and in fact was an engine rather for the incitement of passion than for its moderation, an auxiliary to human ambition and questionable designs rather than the simple handmaid of the Gospel and of morality. Mademoiselle de Montpensier boasted, towards the end of the century, that she had effected more through the mouth of her preachers than all the rest together with their intrigues, arms, and armies. For the evil as well as for the good influences of their sensational pulpit oratory the Jesuits must be held accountable; for Boucher's murderous instigations as much as for the comparatively purer evangelism of others. There were, indeed, French preachers in the sixteenth century, before the Society of Jesus had been founded, who knew both how to rouse the populace to enthusiasm and how to brave the pride and tyranny of authority. Olivier Maillard, a Franciscan monk, and Michel Menot, a friar of the same order, had set the example of that popular and outspoken rhetoric which most surely wins its way to the heart of the masses, and had not stinted their indignant protests against the cruel lusts of Louis XI. Their declamation, though chiefly in a kind of macaronic Latin, was little less violent than that of their successors half a century later, upon whom it is not improbable that we may trace the direct influence of their example.<sup>2</sup> But Maillard and Menot were preachers of the Gospel; as genuinely and as earnestly so as the earliest Reformers; whilst the preachers of the League were at all

<sup>1</sup> Demogeot, *Histoire de la littérature française*. "Les Prédicateurs de la Ligue," p. 300, *et passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Maillard died in 1502, though some say ten years later. Menot lived until 1518.

events political agitators and demagogues, more or less conscientiously religious in their style, but still setting before themselves political ends as their most anxious consideration, and allowing the taste of the populace to determine the form of their oratory, in order that their eloquence might lull and snare the mob.

If the outrage of style and the vehemence of declamation had been the worst faults of the preachers of the League, we should have had little to allege against them. The times were such that pulpit oratory must have attained a development of this kind, or have become utterly ineffectual and neglected. Demoralised by constant civil war, and by the bold challenging of supreme authority in Church and State, the mob could not have been reached by anything less emotional and vehement than the preaching which rivalled in popular favour the melodramatic representations of the stage. But religion stooped still lower in its assault upon the minds of the masses, and the League has to answer for a deliberate indication and justification of murder. It is true that in the adoption of this sophistry they do not stand alone, either in that or in proximate generations. Puritans must share the reproach with Roman Catholics, Englishmen with Frenchmen. The pamphleteers of the sixteenth century argued the point over and over again. François Hotman, on the morrow of St. Bartholomew, maintained the doctrine in his *Gaule Franke*.<sup>1</sup> Suréau declared that Charles IX. would merit death if he refused to sanction Calvinism. The Protestant Hubert Languet wrote his *Vindiciæ contra tyrannos* to show that monarchs were the mere creatures of the people's will, and that the determination of their reigns would follow justly upon the people's displeasure. In England Milton, and the author of the pamphlet *Killing no Murder*, argued

<sup>1</sup> See Réaume, *Prédateurs du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in whose footsteps we are here treading.



much in the same fashion ; as also did the French savant Bodin.<sup>1</sup> The perilous teaching bore its natural fruit ; and in two instances, it must be confessed, this fruit was almost of a nature to confirm the respective partisans of the murderers in their belief. We refer to the assassination of the Guises, and the death of Henry III. at the hand of Jacques Clément. The manner in which the latter act was regarded by the Leaguers, who had been enraged at the favour shown by the dissolute king to Henry of Navarre, may be recognised in more than one document of contemporary literature. Here is the conclusion of the most significant pamphlet<sup>2</sup> on the subject :—

“ Ah, holy and happy martyr (Jacques Clément), inasmuch as you did it not to receive therefrom any recompense here below, which must in truth have been too small, we pledge ourselves and our successors for ever to pray Him, in whose hand are all possible recompenses, to give you the merited reward of such and so excellent a martyrdom.”

Of all the preachers of the League, Boucher was the most eloquent and the most pugnacious. A pedant with a turn for fighting, he alternately wrote learned diatribes in Latin, and egged on the populace to revolt against the constituted State authorities. In French he composed *The Life and Noteworthy Deeds of Henry of Valois, set forth at length, without curtailing anything ; wherein are contained the treasons, perfidies, sacrileges, exactions, cruelties, and disgraces of that hypocrite and apostate*. The Latin work which has come down to us is a treatise *On the Righteous Removal of Henry III*. Herein he glorifies the assassin Clément after the following fashion :—

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i., bk. iii. ch. 3, page 325.

<sup>2</sup> *Le martyre de frère Jacques Clément, de l'ordre de Saint-Dominique, contenant au vray toutes les particularités plus remarquables de sa sainte résolution et très-heureuse entreprise à l'encontre de Henri de Valois, Paris, chez R. Le Fizelier, rue Saint-Jacques, à la Bible d'or, 1589.*

"Lo! in the midst of our writing, whilst the pulpit, whilst public conferences, the organisation of the army occupy our time and disturb our leisure, lo! a piece of news at once wonderful and terrible is spread abroad. A young man, another Ehud, more courageous than Ehud, and genuinely inspired by Christ, by a paramount grace has repeated the act of Judith on Holofernes, the act of David on Goliath. Jacques Clément, of a truth, has but put in practice a general doctrine; but this courage, this resolution so gloriously fulfilled, which he had opened beforehand to one or two, all this deserves gratitude, and has spread joy, and holy joy, in the hearts of good men. Glory be to God! Peace is restored to the Church, to the country, by the death of this wild beast. Clément has made him expiate his false clemency."

The bitterness of Boucher was not satiated by the death of the king. He labours to curse even his memory, and leaves the monarch's name—Henri de Valois—pilloried in half-a-dozen anagrams, such as *Vilain Hérodes! Dehors le Vilain! O crudelis hyena! O le Judas Henri*, and the like. And even after Henry IV. had become a Roman Catholic Boucher preached, on nine successive days, his nine sermons *On the pretended Conversion of Henry de Bourbon*, in which he did his best to persuade the country that the king was a hypocrite. "Let us get at the bottom," he said, "of this show of absolution; let us see whether it has any vitality, or whether it is a mere phantom, a mere stage figure . . . a mere child's puppet, or a mere masquerade garment in which to play at absolution on the stage of St. Denis as they used to play formerly the Passion." Boucher's style was essentially loose and colloquial. He says of Henry III., "We have seen him in the same hour Huguenot and Roman Catholic! And then behold him at the mass! And sound the drums! Long live the King!" A joke or an obfuscation was ever on his lips. "He (the king) is a heretic, a backslider, sacrilegious, a burner of churches, a slaughterer of monks and priests, one who has done nothing else in his life

than make war on the Church, and shed the blood of Catholics." Labitte, who thought that he detected in the League many of the notes and symbols of democracy, describes Boucher's Latin treatise as "the image of the times, a medley of coarse buffooneries, ridiculous quibbles, scholastic subtleties, vehement dogmatism, declamations of the market-place, legal quirks, crude biblical learning, profane pedantry, impassioned animosities, the rubbish of Papal theocracy, and an indefinable anticipation of revolutionary doctrines."<sup>1</sup> We could say nothing harsher, and we may leave the controversialist of the sixteenth century to the mercy of the critic of the nineteenth.

### § 3. ADVOCATES OF THE LEAGUE.

Amongst the famous Sixteen who opposed the accession of Henry of Navarre in Paris was Louis d'Orléans, a learned advocate, who produced an ephemeral pamphlet under the title : *A Warning to French Catholics from an English Catholic*. It was he who praised the "very wholesome blood-letting of St. Bartholomew," bidding his readers beware lest they should be called on to experience, as in England, the cruelties of a heretic king. "We are accused," he says, "of being Spaniards. Yea, rather than have a Huguenot prince, we would go and seek, I say not merely a Spanish, but a Tartar, a Muscovite, a Scythian Catholic." The same Louis d'Orléans is to be credited with another pamphlet, perhaps the most bitter of all that have come down to us. It was written whilst its author was advocate-general, a fact which doubtless speaks more eloquently of the licence of the age, and the temporary feebleness of authority, than of any recognised freedom of the press. The brochure in question is entitled

<sup>1</sup> *De la Démocratie chez les Prédicateurs de la Ligue*, p. 97.

*The Banquet of the Count of Arête*; and we may judge of its vigour and tone by a single specimen. The Protestant ministers, says d'Orléans, "ought to be strung up like fagots from base to summit of the tree in the fire of Saint John;"<sup>1</sup> whilst the king himself "should be put into the hogshead where they put the cats."<sup>2</sup> . . . a sacrifice pleasing to heaven, and delightful to the whole earth."

A *Dialogue between a Royalist and a Ligueur*<sup>3</sup> was another successful pamphlet produced under the auspices of the Sixteen; the authorship being ascribed to Morin de Cromé. The work is useful to the historian as containing evidence not elsewhere found concerning the origin and the conduct of the Sixteen, and of the League generally. There can be little doubt that the hatred displayed by the pamphleteers of the day against Henry of Navarre had its encouragement, if not its source, in the lavishly expended doubloons of Spanish emissaries.

One of the fiercest soldiers who fought against the Protestants with his pen as bitterly as he fought against them with his sword, was Blaise de Montluc, who, from a simple private, rose to become Marshal of France. He died, indeed, almost before the League had become generally organised;<sup>4</sup> but his *Commentaries* form an important part of the literature of the religious wars; and they were recognised by Henry IV., after he had become a Roman Catholic, as "the soldier's Bible." Montluc wrote much about the events of his time, more about himself; and he wrote nothing more characteristic than the sentence: "People might know where I had passed, for on the trees by the roads they found the

<sup>1</sup> It was the custom to celebrate the summer solstice by the lighting of large fires; hence on Saint John's Eve a large bonfire was kindled. It is said to be the remains of a Druidical superstition.

<sup>2</sup> In allusion to the practice of throwing a large cask filled with live cats into the midst of the fire.

<sup>3</sup> *Dialogue du Majeur et du Mameur.*

<sup>4</sup> In 1577.



tokens ;"<sup>1</sup> these tokens being the bodies of his enemies who hung upon the trees by the way, for "a man hanged astonishes more than a hundred killed." He never spared a foe ; never weakened himself by dropping the point of his sword from an enemy's throat, or permitting his pen to be generous to one whom he hated. Hear the manner in which his *Commentaries* are recorded :—

"Think it not strange that I have been as fortunate as I say, for I have never set before me aught but my duty ; and I have acknowledged that all comes from God, to whom I confided everything, although the Huguenots have deemed me an atheist ; they are my enemies and are not to be believed. Whilst I have had imperfections and vices, and am no more holy than others (they have their share, albeit they mortify themselves), still I have ever placed my confidence in God, acknowledging that my fortune or misfortune must come from Him, attributing to Him all the successes which He has given me in battle. I have never found myself in any contest that I have not called Him to my aid, and I have not spent a day of my life without praying to Him and seeking His pardon. And often, I can say with truth, I have seen my enemies with such fear that I felt my heart or limbs trembling (let us make no boast—the fear of death comes before the eyes) ; but as I had made my prayer to God, I felt my strength revive."<sup>2</sup>

Montluc was one of those men who may be considered as the test-characters of literature ; who by circumstances and natural bent are men of action, and who make a stir in the world and a certain name in letters through the same constraining necessity—the necessity of doing energetically what they find themselves in a position to do. He served in Italy, Lorraine, and Guienne ; had been present at five pitched battles, seventeen assaults, eleven sieges, two hundred skirmishes. He received twenty-four wounds, of which the last one, which took away half of his face, was when sixty-

<sup>1</sup> "On pouvait connaître par là où j'étais passé car par les arbres sur les chemins on trouvait les enseignes."

<sup>2</sup> *Commentaries*, bk. vii.

seven years old. He persuaded Francis the First, then old and feeble, to allow the Duke d'Enghien to attack the German and English troops, and this in spite of the king's council, and by the influence of his warlike Gascon eloquence alone. The victory of C  risolles<sup>1</sup> was the consequence of this permission.

Let us give here the bold and heart-stirring speech which he delivered before Francis the First, and which sounds even now like the blast of a trumpet :—

“Sire—I consider myself very happy . . . because I have to speak before a soldier-king, and not before a king who has never been in war. . . . We are five or six thousand Gascons. Count them, for you know that the companies are not wholly complete; therefore all can never come to the battle; but I think that we shall be five thousand five hundred or six hundred Gascons; count them, and I pledge my honour for this; all, captains and soldiers, will give their names and their native place, and will forfeit their heads if they shall not fight on the day of battle, if you please to grant it and give us leave to fight. It is a thing for which we have waited, and which we have desired a long time. Believe, Sire, that there are no soldiers in the world better than those. . . . Who do you think can kill nine or ten thousand men . . . all resolved to conquer or to die? Such people are not thus undone, they are no beginners. I dare say that if we had all one arm fastened to the body, it would not yet be in the power of the hostile army to kill us for a whole day without losing the greatest part of their people and of their best men. Think, therefore, when we shall have our two arms free and swords in our hands, if it will be easy and facile to beat us. Certainly, Sire, I have learned from wise captains that an army composed of twelve to fifteen thousand men can make head against one of thirty thousand, for it is not the great number which conquers, it is the stout heart. . . . All that stirs these gentlemen, who have given their advice before your Majesty, is the fear of a loss; they say nothing else but, *If we should lose, if we should lose*; I never heard any one of them say, *If we should gain, if we should gain, what great advantage would accrue*

<sup>1</sup> 14th of April 1544.

to us ! For God's sake, Sire, do not fear to grant us our request, and let me not return with that shame that they should say that you were afraid to trust the chance of a battle in our hands, who offer you willingly and cordially our lives."<sup>1</sup>

Eleven years afterwards Montluc was sent to Sienna to defend the place against the Imperialists under the Marquess of Marignano. Though very seriously wounded he reached the town amidst great difficulties, and defended it during ten months. In 1562 he was sent by Catherine de Medici into Guienne, and there he showed what he could do. He travelled always accompanied by two hangmen, whom he called his lackeys, and who were ever occupied.

<sup>1</sup> We give the original, as a specimen of Montluc's style :—"Sire, je me tiens bienheureux . . . parceque j'ay à parler devant un Roy soldat et non devant un Roy qui n'a jamais esté en guerre. . . . Nous sommes de cinq à six mille Gascons. Comptez, car vous savez que jamais les compagnies ne sont du tout complètes ; aussi tout ne se peut jamais trouver à la bataille ; mais j'estime que nous serons cinq mil cinq cens ou six cens Gascons ; comptez, et de cela je vous en respons sur mon honneur ; tous, capitaines et soldats vous baillerons nos noms et les lieux d'où nous sommes, et vous obligerons nos testes que tous combattrons le jour de la bataille, s'il vous plaist de l'accorder et nous donner congé de combattre. C'est chose que nous attendons et désirons il y a longtemps. Croyez, Sire, qu'au monde il n'y a point de soldats plus résolus que ceux-là. . . . Qui voulez vous qui tue neuf ou dix mil hommes et mil ou douze cens chevaux tous résolus de mourir ou de vaincre ? Telles gens que cela ne se deffont pas ainsi, ce ne sont pas des apprentis. J'oserais dire que si nous avions tous un bras lié, il ne serait encores en la puissance de l'armée ennemie de nous tuer de tout un jour sans perte de la plus grand part de leurs gens et des meilleurs hommes. Pensez donc, quand nous aurons les deux bras libres et le fer en la main, s'il sera aisé et facile de nous battre. Certes, Sire, j'ai appris des sages capitaines qu'une armée composée de douze à quinze mil hommes en peut affronter une de trente mille, car n'est pas le grand nombre qui vaine, c'est le bon coeur. . . . Tout ce qui esmeut messieurs qui ont opiné devant Vostre Majesté est la crainte d'une perte ; ils ne disent autre chose si ce n'est : *si nous perdons, si nous perdons* ; je n'ai ouy personne d'eux qui aye jamais dit : *si nous gagnons, si nous gagnons, quel grand bien nous adviendra !* Pour Dieu ! Sire, ne craignez de nous accorder nostre requeste, et que je ne m'en retourne pas avec ceste honte qu'on die que vous avez peur de mettre le hasard d'une bataille entre nos mains, qui vous offrons volontiers et de bon coeur, nostre vie."—*Commentaires*, bk. ii. 1544.

Let us hear him relate himself how he went to work with them.

"I had the two hangmen behind me, well equipped with their arms, and above all with a very sharp knife; in a rage I jumped up and seized Verdier by the collar, and said to him: 'O wicked rascal, have you dared indeed to sully with your wicked tongue the majesty of your king?' He answered me: 'Ah! sir, be merciful to a sinner.' Then I felt more enraged than before, and said to him, 'Wicked man, do you wish me to have mercy upon you, and you have not respected your king?' I pushed him roughly on the ground, and his neck fell precisely on a piece of the cross which had been upset, and I said to the hangman, 'Strike, villain.' My words were immediately followed by his blow, which carried away moreover half-a-foot of the cross. I had the other two fellows hung on an elm tree which was quite near, and because the deacon was only eighteen years old, I did not wish to have him killed, and also that he might bring the tidings to his brethren; but I ordered the hangmen to give him so many blows with a whip that I have been told he died of them ten or twelve days after. This is the first execution which I ordered when leaving my house, without any sentence or witness, for I have heard it said that, in such things, we must begin with an execution."<sup>1</sup>

Such an act of cold-blooded ferocity could hardly be believed, but Montluc had his excuse at hand. He thought he only did his duty to his king, his faith, and his religion, and for such holy causes everything is allowed; he pretends that it was not in his nature to be cruel;<sup>2</sup> but he does not convince us; for<sup>3</sup> he says himself in his *Commentaries* that "his nature induced him more to employ his hands than to pacify matters, loving better to strike and to play with knives than to make speeches." Every town taken by his troops was sacked, for soldiers must have their "quarry;" every place pacified meant, in Montluc's language, that he had killed or hung more than half of the Huguenots, and only

<sup>1</sup> *Commentaries*, bk. v. 1562.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* bk. iv.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* bk. v. 1563.



regretted that he could not finish the task. His ferocity often finds vent in words which become eloquent through their very calmness and conciseness; thus he speaks of an "unfortunate" peace, using the word "unfortunate" because so many princes of the royal family and other foreign princes are without the occupation of shedding blood. And again, "The Turks set a fine example to the French; in Turkey everybody is a soldier,—therefore what a power they have!"

Such a man, who knows only sufficient Latin to say his prayers, who does not wish to imitate Livy or Cæsar, whom he has read in French, displays clearly and unmistakably the reflex influences of a warlike and bloodthirsty temperament, and of a fanaticism in religion. In De Montluc's writings we see the mutual action and reaction of the soldier and the commentator—the combatant in a holy war whose sanctity was measured by the shedding of blood, and the combatant in another holy war, carried on within the soul, and counting its victories also by the consenting smiles of the God of battles. Montluc making the road by which he travelled fair to look on by the corpses of the Huguenots; Montluc, writing himself down as the favourite of heaven, because he had been successful in slaughtering his foes—these are evidently but two different aspects of the same picture. The civil war gave its tone and colour to the *Commentaries* of the stern and bloodthirsty captain, who helped to shape the annals of his time as he helped to create its actual history. Moreover, the actor in Montluc preceded the writer; he would probably never have written at all if old age and many wounds had not compelled him to take rest. Action had developed in him the desire and ability to write, and only two years before his death, when he was seventy-five years old, he began his *Commentaries*. He never "thought of the making of books," he himself tells us; "I was incapable of that." Incapable he may have been of a great original

production ; but he was capable of being a medium between the action of his own day and the action of the generations which succeeded him. The use of the sword had taught him the use of the pen. Let us admit that his style is incisive and clear, that it distinctly shows the man as he was and lived, a machine necessary for war, cruel, unscrupulous, with hardly any human feelings,<sup>1</sup> but honest and courageous, according to his own ideas, not approving of the St. Bartholomew's murder, most probably because he thought it cowardly, but not from any consideration for the lives of the Huguenots. He had taken for his device the following words : " Our lives and our goods are our king's, our soul belongs to God, honour belongs to us, for my king has no power over my honour." His actions remind us of those of the stern soldiers of Cromwell in Ireland, at the taking of Drogheda and Wexford, and perhaps still more of the deeds of the Irish rapparees in 1690.

#### § 4. ADVERSARIES OF THE LEAGUE.

The preachers and writers of the League had powerful and numerous opponents, both on the part of the king and amongst the ranks of the Huguenots. The most notable production of the royalist party, and indeed one of the most formidable literary documents ever given to the world, was the famous *Satire Ménippée* ; of which it has been said,<sup>2</sup> with a certain licence of hyperbole, that it was worth as much to Henry IV.

<sup>1</sup> Montluc was twice married, and had four sons and six daughters. He never mentions his wives or daughters, the latter of whom nearly all became nuns, but speaks of a Turkish horse, which " after his children he loved more than anything in the world." Two of his sons were killed at his side ; the third, Captain Peyrot, was killed at Muleira ; and Montaigne states that Montluc expressed his regret to him that he had always treated his son coolly and kept him at a distance, and had never shown him how much he loved him.

<sup>2</sup> By the President Henault.

as the Battle of Ivry. Much, in fact, was needed after Ivry had been won before Henry of Navarre could consider himself firmly fixed upon his throne. He lightly said, when consenting to renounce his earlier faith, that Paris was "well worth a mass;" but the mass was attended, and he had yet his sternest enemies to fight. Eight months followed his change of religion before the king was able to enter Paris,<sup>1</sup> and they were months during which his fortunes trembled in the scales. Finally the party of the League disappeared before him; their rôle was played out. The Franciscan Garin was found concealed in a granary. The king was magnanimous, for he could afford it. "Don't hurt Garin," he said to those who brought the preaching friar before him. Boucher took refuge in Spain; Rose, Hamilton, Pelletier, and others were exiled; Cueilly might perhaps have remained; but with characteristic boldness he bearded the victorious king from the pulpit, declaring him to be an excommunicated heretic. He was arrested as he descended from his temporary vantage-ground, and ordered to quit the country. Henry attended at the Sorbonne in person, and said to the assembled doctors: "I have been preached against, I have been contumeliously treated, but I wish to forget all and to pardon all, even my parish-priest; and I except Boucher alone, who preaches lies and mischief at Beauvais. Yet I do not seek his life, but only that he should hold his tongue." And, at last, the long religious struggles were terminated—for a season, at least—by the Edict of Nantes,<sup>2</sup> in which liberty of worship was granted to every subject in the kingdom.

It is beyond question that nothing did more towards the moral victory of Henry over his subjects, and towards his peaceable confirmation in the royal dignities, than the *Satire Ménippée*, which, though not published until the spring of 1594, had been circulated some nine months earlier, partially,

<sup>1</sup> March 22, 1594.

<sup>2</sup> April 30, 1598.

and in manuscript, handed about from one individual to another, until it had almost produced its effect before it had reached the printer's office. The history of its origin is a literary episode which has inspired the mind of more than one French writer with eloquence and wit; and perhaps we cannot do better than quote the able account of M. Lenient.<sup>2</sup>

"On the old *quai des Orfèvres*, which to this day retains a certain venerable show of an age gone by, a stone's-throw from the Sainte Chapelle, not far from the great hall made memorable by the acting of the Basoche, and in the very house, it is said, where Boileau was to be born, lived a peaceful *conseiller-clerc* to Parliament, Jacques Gillot, a sort of Atticus of the town, a lover of letters, books, and men of wit. His table and his library attracted to his house, week by week, a select society of men of various professions, connected with the Church, the Court, the University, united by a close sympathy of studies and opinions. The little guest-chamber presently became a literary areopagus of learning and politics, where all the questions of the day were discussed. Of these there were abundance in that age, and the judges were competent. Gillot, in the first place, the *Amphitryon* who worthily held his place in this assemblage of amiable and witty talkers, a great collector of news, sprightly sayings and epigrams, whereof he compiled the *Chroniques gillotinées*, a genuine journal of scandal of the days of the League. Next, a canon of Rouen, secretary to the Cardinal de Bourbon, Pierre Leroy, the suggester of the *Ménuippée*, a worthy man, upright, and of rare modesty, who was as persevering in his obscure life as others are in making themselves notorious; a gentleman of Poitou, provost of the *connétablie*, Nicolas Rapin, a valiant pen and a valiant sword, who fought at Ivry under the banner of the Béarnais; a professor of the Collège Royal, a scholar and a poet, a jester, and a finished tippler

<sup>2</sup> *La Satire en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 429.



Passerat ; next, a former tutor of Henry IV., Florent Chrestien, a loyal heart, a trenchant wit ; and lastly, Pierre Pithou, a rival of de l'Hôpital,<sup>1</sup> the flower of learned and upright men. To these names we must add that of Gilles Durant, an easy and humorous rhymester, who intones the requiem of the Holy Union at the hour when it succumbs beneath the laughter and the hisses of the *Ménippée*."

So much for the men of this famous coterie ; but of their spirit also our critic has something valuable to say :—"Without being exactly enrolled in any sect or faction, their sympathies were entirely with the politic and moderate party. In them lived that ancient national spirit which we have found so vigorous on the morrow of Poitiers and Agincourt. They hate the foreigner, the trooper, the Italian, the Spaniard above all, with as much fervour as Alain Chartier and Eustache Deschamps<sup>2</sup> cursed the triumphant Englishmen ; good Catholics for the most part, not specially Roman, essentially Catholic, and with a fair share of enmity towards the Jesuits, who avenged themselves by the pen of Garasse. Some of them, like Florent Chrestien and Pithou, had passed through the camp of the Reformation to return again to Catholicism, but without fuss, like men who expect neither glory nor profit from their conversion. Such were the frequenters of the *quai des Orfèvres* : all Frenchmen of the old stock, having a racy mind, and that of the best—learned without pedantry, refined critics, waggish rhymesters, and inexhaustible retailers of narratives."

Of the writers of this "most excellent satire of the time," as Agrippa d'Aubigné, himself a satirist, calls it, the only professed Protestant was Passerat, to whom are attributed the bulk of the verses.<sup>3</sup> He was a man of no inconsiderable

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. bk. iii. ch. 3, pp. 321-324.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i. bk. ii. ch. 2, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> D'Aubigné claims some verses for Rapin ; *Le Regret sur la mort de l'Asne liqueur*, added subsequently to the first publication, is by Gilles Durant.

learning, having been selected on the death of Ramus to fill the chair of eloquence and Latin poetry in the Collège de France. A finished Greek and Latin scholar, who kept undimmed amidst the chaos of revolution and the demoralisation of civil war the lustre of the revived classical spirit, his leisure moments were given to the satirical muse, whom he cultivated with all the *verve* of his predecessor Marot, all the freedom of his successor Regnier. The jurisconsult Pierre Pithou, perhaps the most profound thinker and scholar of the coterie, was an able and constant champion of the Gallican Church—of the reformed Catholicism which elected to hold a happy mean between the two combative extremes, and which had the strength of mind to reject most of the patent errors of Romanism without incurring the then very formidable reproach of schism. He had been with the Duke de Montmorency in England, and was nearly murdered on the St. Bartholomew night. During several months he was obliged to remain in hiding, and at last followed the example of Henry IV., and became a Roman Catholic. He was a great favourite of that king, and was appointed, against his will, *procureur-général au parlement*, an appointment which he resigned as soon as he was able to do so. The *Satire Menippée* was a third tribute of imitation to the Greek satirist Menippos.<sup>1</sup> It consists of four parts.

1. *The virtue of the Catholicon of Spain* was written by Louis Leroy, and was the foundation upon which the composite satire was built up. Leroy was a Gallican priest from Normandy, chaplain to the Cardinal de Bourbon, who in a happy moment conceived the idea of sublimating the cruel, arrogant, and persecuting spirit of Roman and Spanish Catholicism in the form of a miraculous drug, the concoction whereof he attributes to a "very funny" quack, Philip de Seba, Cardinal of Piacenza, in Spain. This concoction has

<sup>1</sup> The first imitation was the *σπουδαίους Μενίππος* of Lucian, whom Varrø subsequently commemorated in his *Menippean Satires*.

been made in the college of Jesuits at Toledo, "where, having found that the simple Catholicon of Rome had no other effect than the edification of souls, and the production of salvation and happiness in the other world merely, chafing at so long a process, he thought of concocting this drug, so that, by dint of working, kneading, straining, calcining and refining, he had made a sovereign electuary which surpasses every philosopher's stone."<sup>1</sup> The proofs whereof were set forth in twenty or thirty articles, of which Leroy gives us twenty. Let us be satisfied with the last half-dozen.

"15. Have no religion, mock the priests as much as you like, and the sacraments of the Church, and all divine and human laws, eat flesh in Lent in spite of the Church, you shall need no other absolution and no other seasoning<sup>2</sup> than half a dram of Catholicon.

"16. Will you forthwith be a Cardinal? Rub one of the horns of your cap with *Higuiero*,<sup>3</sup> it will become red, and you shall be turned into a Cardinal, were you the most incestuous and ambitious prelate in the world.

"17. Be as guilty as la Mothe-Serrand, convicted of coining like Mandreville, a . . . like Senault, a wretch like Bussy le Clerc, an atheist and ingrate like him who has a preferment of his own name,<sup>4</sup> only wash in some *Higuiero*-water, and you are a spotless lamb, and a pillar of the faith.

"18. If some wise prelate or counsellor of State, a genuine French Catholic, presume to oppose the sly enterprises of the enemies of the State, provided you have one grain of this Catholicon on your tongue, you will be permitted to accuse him of wishing, whilst God sleeps, to let the Catholic religion go to ruin, as in England.

"19. Let some good preacher, not being a pedant, quit the rebel towns to assist in disenchanting the simple people, if he

<sup>1</sup> *Satyre Ménippée*, ed. Ratisbon, 3 vols. 1752, vol. i. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> The original has *chardonnerotte*, from the Latin *carduus*, a thistle; or seasoning with Spanish thistles.

<sup>3</sup> *Higuiero del Inferno* was only another name for the Catholicon, and means literally "fig-tree from hell," because this tree, though it had a fair outward appearance, produced very bad fruit; and the Ligue did the same.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Desportes, the poet, Abbé of Bonport.

have not a bit of *Hiquiero* in his hood, he may just return from whence he came.

"20. Let Spain set her foot on the throat of the honour of France, let the Lorrainers strive to rob the legitimate inheritances of the Princes of royal blood, let them oppose them no less vehemently than craftily, and dispute with them for the Crown, only provide yourself with Catholicon, you shall see that men will take more pleasure in seeing some unseasonable wrangle than in working with all their might to compel the cunning tyrants, trembling with fear, to let go their hold."

(2.) This episode of the two quacks,<sup>1</sup> whilst it serves to set clearly before us the corrupt spirit of the leaders of the League, is in the form of an introduction to the *Abridgment of the Farce of the States of the League, convoked in Paris on the tenth of February 1593; taken from the Memoirs of Mademoiselle de la Lande, alias the Bayonnese girl, and from the secret Confabulations between her and Father Commet, a Jesuit*; which constitutes the bulk of the satire. The actual procession, of which the first part of this description is a parody, took place in 1590; and by its extravagance, its incongruities, its medley of the grave and the farcical, it seems to have richly deserved the severe chastisement which it received three years later at the hands of the coterie of the *quai des Orfèvres*. All the mean political rivalries which pretend to work only for the public good are exposed there; all these men, who take God as a shield to hide their own personal baseness, pass before us. The churchmen are in a majority; vicars, curates, monks and friars, wearing arms over their frocks and helmets above their cowls, with blunderbusses, daggers, pikes, and a whole arsenal of weapons about them, "all grown rusty by Catholic humility." One of these extemporised soldiers fires his gun by accident, and immediately there is a panic; the whole procession gets in disorder, and is only kept back by "a little holy water, just

<sup>1</sup> The other, a Lorrainer, was intended for Cardinal de Pellevé.



as flies and hornets are quieted by a little dust." After the procession the leaguers are described, as they assemble in the hall appointed for their meeting ; and much care is bestowed in the explanation of the tapestries with which the walls are hung—the first of which represents the golden calf of Scripture, "wherein Moses and Aaron were figured by the deceased King Henry III. and the late Cardinal de Bourbon ; but the golden calf was the image of the late Duc de Guise, raised on high, adored by the people." On others appeared the revolt of Absalom against David, the victories of Senlis, Arques, and Ivry, and the murder of Henry III. by "Frère Jacques Clément," on whose forehead was written in large letters the anagram of his name, *c'est l'enfer qui m'a créé*. Thus the assembly had their own condemnation always before their eyes.

Then, after they had all taken their places and when "the noise and the bad smells had subsided," follow at considerable length the harangues of the principal counsellors, which are conceived by their various authors in an excellent vein of paradox and humour. The supposed speakers utter their speeches, not as they really would have done, but as truth would have compelled them to do ; they do not glorify their deeds, but rather confess their iniquities. They go through their intellectual antics with all the ineptitude and helplessness of a box of marionettes, talking treason and nonsense, rage and folly, bad logic and morality ; crushing their best friends under the weight of their unintentional satire, contradicting each other, disproving and betraying themselves. The speech of the Duke de Mayenne, "Monsieur le Lieutenant," brother of the Duke de Guise, is the first, and opens thus : "You are all witness that since I have taken up arms for the Holy League, I have always had my preservation in such regard, that I have preferred heartily my private interest to the cause of God, who will know how to guard himself without me." Then follows a complete list of all his evil doings, crimes, desires, poltroonery, etc. The Legate's speech, written

by Jacques Gillot, comes next; it is a medley of Italian and Latin. He complains of the prolixity of his predecessor, and therefore mercifully cuts himself short whilst preaching massacre and extermination, all in the name of religion. Then follow the speeches of the Cardinal de Pellevé, written by Florent Chrestien; the Archbishop of Lyons's by Nicholas Rapin, the bellicose Rector Rose's by the same, Monsieur Rieux's, on behalf of the nobility; and finally comes the long harangue of d'Aubray, representative of the *Tiers-État*, which in the form of an elaborate complaint of the evils under which, France was groaning, betrays the evil character of the defence urged by the promoters of the League. It is a graphic picture of the times, expressed in a true spirit of eloquence, which vindicates for Pithou, its author, a high place amongst the prose writers and orators of the century. Listen to one paragraph of his nervous and vigorous eloquence, in which the true patriot speaks out from behind the mask of the puppet.

“The depth of our miseries is that, amidst so many misfortunes and necessities, we are permitted neither to complain nor to demand succour; and, with death between our teeth, we must say that we are well, and too happy to be wretched in so good a cause. O Paris, which is no longer Paris, but a den of wild beasts, a citadel of Spaniards, Walloons, and Neapolitans, a refuge and safe retreat of thieves, murderers, and assassins; will you never again recognise your dignity, and remember what you have been at the price of what you are; will you never recover from the frenzy which, in the place of a legitimate and gracious king, has spawned for you fifty kinglets and fifty tyrants? Behold you in irons, behold you in the Spanish inquisition, more intolerable a thousand times, and more hard to endure to minds born free and frank, as are the French, than the most cruel deaths which the Spaniards could devise. You could not support a slight increase of taxes and dues, and a few new edicts which affected you but little; but now you endure that men should pillage your houses; that they should exact even your blood, that they should imprison your senators, that they should drive

out and banish your good citizens and counsellors ; that they should hang and massacre your principal magistrates. You see it and you endure it ; you not only endure it, but you approve of it and praise it, and dare not and cannot do otherwise. You could not endure your good-natured king, so free, so familiar, who made himself like a fellow-citizen and burgher of your town, which he enriched, which he adorned with sumptuous buildings, to which he added strong and proud ramparts, decorated with honourable privileges and exemptions. What do I say ? Could not endure him ? Far worse : you drove him from his town, from his palace, from his couch. What, drove him ? You pursued him. What, pursued him ? You assassinated him, canonised the assassin, and made bonfires at his death. And now you see how much this death profited you ; for it is the cause why another has risen in his place, much more vigilant, more painstaking, far more warlike, who will know well how to press you closer, as you have, to your cost, already discovered.”<sup>1</sup>

(3.) These harangues are themselves interspersed here and there with epigrams and verses. The speech of the Rector Rose has a couple, no doubt the work of Rapin ; whilst several occur in Pithou's oration of M. d'Aubray. These latter, with a few more in the introductions to the several

<sup>1</sup> “L'extrémité de nos misères est, qu'entre tant de malheurs et de nécessités il ne nous est pas permis de nous plaindre, ny demander secours : et faut qu'ayant la mort entre les dents, nous disions que nous nous portons bien, et que nous sommes trop heureux d'estre mal-heureux pour si bonne cause. O Paris ! qui n'est plus Paris, mais une spelunke de bestes farouches, une Citadelle d'Espagnols, Wallons, et Napolitains ; un asyle, et seure retraite de voleurs, meurtriers et assassinateurs, ne veux-tu jamais te ressentir de ta dignité, et te souvenir qui tu as esté, au prix de ce que tu es ? Ne veux-tu jamais te guerir de cette frénésie qui pour un légitime et gracieux roy t'a engendré cinquante Royetelets et cinquante Tyrans ? Te voilà aux fers, te voilà en l'inquisition d'Espagne, plus intolérable mille fois, et plus dure à supporter aux esprits nés libres et francs, comme sont les François, que les plus cruelles morts, dont les Espagnols se scauroient adviser. Tu n'as peu supporter une légère augmentation de tailles et d'offices, et quelques nouveaux édicts qui ne t'importoient nullement ; mais tu endures qu'on pille tes maisons, qu'on te rançonne jusques au sang, qu'on emprisonne tes sénateurs, qu'on chasse et bannisse tes bons citoyens et conseillers : qu'on pende, qu'on massacre tes principaux magistrats : tu le vois, et tu l'endures : tu ne l'endures pas seule-

speeches, and some five or six hundred lines comprising a distinct division of the *Satyre*, are the work of Passerat. There is a good deal of spirit and point in several of these epitaphs, epigrams, and apostrophes; though, of course, it would be impossible to measure by our own standard the effect which they must have produced at the time of their publication. Take, as an example, this *dizaine* "to the Spaniards concerning their doubloons."<sup>1</sup>

"Heavens, how fine and yellow they are,  
Your doubloons;  
Let some more be fetched,  
Ye demi-Moors,  
Amongst your yellow sands;  
Or else go back,  
Swarthy ones.  
Paris, which is no prey for you,  
Will pack you off  
With many long faces."<sup>2</sup>

Or again, with a point steeped in gall, because the badge of the house of Guise, which was the rallying-sign of the Leaguers, was a double cross, called *Croix de Lorraine* :—

ment, mais tu l'approuves, et le loues, et n'oserois, et ne scaurois faire autrement. Tu n'as peu supporter ton Roy débonnaire, si facile, si familier, qui s'estoit rendu comme concitoyen, et bourgeois de ta ville, qu'il a enrichie, qu'il a embellie de somptueux bastimens, accrue de forts et superbes ramparts, ornée de privilèges et exemptions honorables. Que dis-je, peu supporter? C'est bien pis; tu l'as chassé de sa ville, de sa maison, de son lit. Quoy, chassé? Tu l'as poursuivy. Quoy, poursuivy? Tu l'as assassiné, canonisé l'assassinateur et faict des feux de joye de sa mort. Et tu vois maintenant combien cette mort t'a profité; car elle est cause qu'un autre est monté en sa place, bien plus vigilant, bien plus laborieux, bien plus guerrier et qui sçaura bien te serrer de plus près, comme tu as à toi dam déjà expérimenté."

<sup>1</sup> *La Satire Ménippée*, vol. i. p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> "Mon Dieu qu'ils sont beaux et  
blonds,  
Vos doublons;  
Faites en chercher encores,  
Demy-Mores,  
Parmy vos jaulnes Sablons.

Où bien vous en retournez  
Bazanez.  
Paris qui n'est vostre proye  
Vous renvoye  
Avecques cent pieds de nez."



"Tell me what this means,  
That Leaguers wear a double cross?  
'Tis because the League crucifies  
Jesus Christ a second time."<sup>1</sup>

Nor did Passerat spare even the personal characteristics of his foes. The Duke de Guise, who was distantly related to the Royal stock, had a flat nose. Passerat wrote:—

"The League, being nonplussed,  
And the Leaguers sore astounded,  
Have thought of a fine device:  
To make a king without a nose."<sup>2</sup>

Whereto is added "A Rejoinder for the Duke:"

"The little Guise makes light  
Of all your quatrains and sonnets;  
For, being flat-nosed and evil-smelling,  
He does not feel when you prick him."<sup>3</sup>

After these verses comes *An Address of the Printer about the explanation of the word Hiquiero d'Inferno, and other things which he has learned from the author*. This pleasant *jeu d'esprit*, in the true Pantagruelistic vein, is followed by a "supplement," entitled *News from the Regions of the Moon*, which, however, was not contained in the earlier editions of the satire.

<sup>1</sup> "Mais dites-moy que signifie  
Que les Ligueurs ont double croix?  
C'est qu'en la Ligue on crucifie  
Jésus Christ encore une fois."

<sup>2</sup> "La Ligue se trouvant camuse,  
Et les Ligueurs fort estonnez,  
Se sont advisez d'une ruse;  
C'est, de se faire un Roy sans nez."

<sup>3</sup> "Le petit Guisard fait la nique  
À tous vos quatrains et sonnets:  
Car estans camus et punais  
Il ne sent point quand on le pique."

The points partly depend on the double signification of *camus*, which means "flat-nosed" and "nonplussed," and on the equivocation between *sentir*, meaning "to smell" and "to feel."

## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. THE DIDACTIC SCHOOL OF POETRY.

So far as we have already seen, the literary result of the Renaissance in France was to revive ancient classical learning, to expand the scope of natural and metaphysical science, to fan into fervent heat the embers of religious controversy, to add a stimulus to satire, and to sharpen the edge of a trenchant national intellect. The *esprit narquois* of the Gaul had been developed to its highest pitch in Rabelais; his calm indifferentism had apparently reached its acme in Montaigne. These advances had been made and these triumphs had been reaped through the medium of a prose style, which, elevated and ennobled by the genius of those who made it their handmaiden, seemed to spring suddenly from infancy to maturity without passing through the long and tedious phases of adolescence. Calvin alone had done as much for French prose as was done by the greatest of his contemporaries in Italy, in Spain, or in England. He was the first to set before his fellow-countrymen a grand model of eloquent and finished expression, and to teach them the vast suppleness and capabilities of the national tongue. It must have appeared to the national prose-writers of the sixteenth century that the poetic form was completely insufficient for the enunciation of the loftiest ideas and the deepest sentiments; that prose, and prose alone, was worthy to be the vehicle of the best moral and intellectual products.

Such, at all events, was the virtual conclusion to which

the literary Renaissance was leading the cultivated minds of France, when the Pléiade<sup>1</sup> suddenly shone above the horizon. Towards the middle of the sixteenth century the few poets to whom it was possible to assign anything like literary value were either drearily walking in the beaten tracks of the old trouvères, wherein the last blade of living grass had long since been trodden into the mire, or else were content to take Marot as the model of a new form of poetic expression. Of these latter the least feeble was Mellin de Saint-Gelais,<sup>2</sup> who lived long enough to see, and unsuccessfully to rail at, the newfangled elegances of the school of Ronsard. Marot died in 1544; five years later Joachim du Bellay,<sup>3</sup> nephew of the Cardinal du Bellay, who had himself earned his place in the annals of French literature, published his *Défense et Illustration de langue française*. The book is crude and over-forcible, as might be expected from the youth of its author; but it was the first articulate profession of the classical theory of French poetry, and marks the inauguration of a literary epoch—say rather the establishment of a new mould and groove of taste—than which none more specially characteristic has been, or will have to be, considered by us.

The passage from the domain of feeling to the domain of form, the step which leads from the preponderance of feeling in literature to the pre-eminence of literary form, has to be taken sooner or later by all nations which are swayed by the classical spirit more powerfully than by any other. The time is sure to come when men are wearied, or ashamed, of perpetually moving in the cycle of ideas and phrases peculiar to the classical tongues of antiquity; when, moreover, they begin to find a greater facility of expression in their own vernacular, and are ambitious to mould their new language and

<sup>1</sup> The Pléiade, after the Greek Pleiads, or sailing stars, was the name given to seven French poets, Ronsard, Daurat, Du Bellay, Belleau, Jodelle, Baïf, and Tyard.

<sup>2</sup> 1491-1558.

<sup>3</sup> 1524-1560.

literature on the model of those which they have set before them as their standard of propriety. The notion occurs to some poets—to one or two amongst them in particular—that the language of their everyday life may become, as it were, the Latin of their own age : that they themselves may be the Tacitus and the Ovid, or at least the Plautus and the Ennius of a new classical epoch. Thenceforth the subject, the naturalness, the verisimilitude of what they write, seems less and less important to them ; to establish and stereotype a phrase, a metre, a form, a paragraph, to select and perpetuate the model of a poem or an essay, becomes in their eyes the most worthy aim of a literary man. The change is naturally more striking in poetry than in prose ; at all events it is made more easily and rapidly in the style which most readily lends itself to specialities of form. Such a change was made in France in the middle of the sixteenth century by the poets of the *Pléiade*. The new fashion of French versification was destined to exert its influence during more than two centuries ; in fact, up to and beyond the Revolution. We shall have occasion to consider its nature and effects hereafter ; for the present let us say that for upwards of two hundred years France had no poet of superlative genius or originality. Dramatists, versifiers of high didactic force and beauty, she was to possess in abundance ; but great poets, none. The man who consents to lace and pad his body, to wear stays and a wig, may look excellently well in a minuet or a court-pageant ; but the free play of his limbs, the natural agility and vigour which he might have enjoyed, must be sacrificed on the shrine of his adopted fashion.

## § 2. RONSARD AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

Joachim du Bellay sounded the call to arms which announced the opening of this new literary campaign, and



raised the standard beneath which the Pléiade, or the *Brigade*, as they began by calling themselves, were originally rallied. Though Ronsard was in the finest sense the leader of the band—certainly the brightest star of the constellation—it does not clearly appear that he was in any degree the instigator of du Bellay's work. The two men were of the same age, and the bond between them, at all events after the year 1549, was a close and lasting one; but it may be taken for granted that the *Défense et Illustration* did much to confirm, if not to form the talent of Ronsard. Listen to the declamation by which the young apostle of the neo-classical faith enforces his doctrine.

"O how I long to see these springs wither, to chastise these small youths, to beat down these attempts, to dry up these Fountains! . . . How I wish these Forlorn ones, these Humble Expectants, these Exiles from Bliss, these Slaves, these Obstructions, were packed back again to the Round Table. Leave all these old French poems to the floral games of Toulouse, and to the *puy*<sup>1</sup> of Rouen: such as rondeaus, ballads, virelais, royal songs, lays, and other such spicy things, which corrupt the taste of our language, and are of no other value than to bear witness to our ignorance! . . . Be assured, my readers, that he will be the genuine poet whom I look for in our language, who shall make me indignant, shall soothe and rejoice me, shall cause me to grieve, to love, to hate, to wonder, to be astounded: in short, who shall hold the bridle of my affections, turning me to this side or that at his pleasure."

To reach this high ideal the poet must labour incessantly, place his chief reliance on the study of the ancients, and "by night and day turn over the leaves of the Greek and Latin models."<sup>2</sup>

"Thither, then, O Frenchmen, advance courageously, towards that illustrious Roman city, and with the booty plundered from:

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. bk. ii. ch. 4, p. 230, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Feuilette de main nocturne et journalle:" *nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.*

her, as you have more than once done, adorn your temples and your altars. Fear no more those cackling geese, that fierce Manlius, and that traitor Camillus, who, under the pretext of good faith, surprises you in your nakedness, as you count out the ransom of the Capitol. Enter that false-tongued Greece, and sow there once again the famous nation of the Gallo-Greeks. Pillage without scruple the sacred treasures of that Delphic temple, as you did of old, and fear no more that dumb Apollo, his false oracles, and his rebounding arrows. Remember your ancient Marseilles, the second Athens, and your Gallic Hercules, drawing the peoples behind him by their ears, with a chain attached to his tongue."<sup>1</sup>

The counsel was plainly and rudely put; and it was the counsel which the young Pierre de Ronsard<sup>2</sup> kept steadily before him during the laborious years in which he deliberately prepared himself to be to France the poet of the future.

Du Bellay wrote also the *Olive*,<sup>3</sup> a collection of a hundred and fifteen sonnets, a few odes, and several poems in the Alexandrine measure. He brought the latter to great perfection, and his *Hymn on Deafness*, and the *Poet's Quartier* bear witness to it. In general he endeavoured to free French verse from many of its most galling fetters, tried to vary the position and emphasis of the cesura, did not scruple to run one line into another, and did not insist upon the alternation

<sup>1</sup> LA dunque, François, marchez couraigeusement vers ceste superbe cité romaine, et des serres despendez l'ville comme vous avez fait plus d'une fois: crevez vos temples et autels. Ne craignez plus ces oies enuées, ce fier Manlius et ce traistre Camille, qui, sous le ombre de bonne foy vous surprennent tous nus costez la ranson du Capitole: descenez en ceste Grece menteuse, et y semez encore un coup la finissime nation des Gallegreus. Pilliez moy sans conscience les sacrez thesours de ce temple delphique, ainsi que vous avez fait autrefois, et ne craignez plus ce muet Apollon, ses faulx oracles, ne ses fleuelles reboundans. Vous souvenez de vostre ancienne Marseille, se-celle Athens, et de vostre Hercules gallique, tirant les peuples après lui, par leurs oreilles, avecques une chaîne attachée à sa langue." \* 1524 1531

<sup>2</sup> An anagram of *Viola*, a lady from Angers, whom he celebrated.

of male and female rhymes. Here is one of his sonnets describing Venice —

“O Magny! you should see these coward Magnificoes,  
 Their splendid arsenal, their vessels, their address,  
 Their palace, their St. Mark, their harbour, their Rialto,  
 Their change, their traffic, their bartering, and their bank;  
 You should behold their long-beak'd antique hoods,  
 Their broad-sleeved gowns, and their caps without brim,  
 Their talk so coarse, their gravity, their demeanour,  
 And then their sage advice on public questions.  
 You'll see their senate balloting on all things:  
 And everywhere their gondolas afloat.  
 Their dames, their feasts, their solitary living:  
 But the best sight of all is to behold  
 These aged wittols going to wed the sea,  
 Whose spouses they are, and the Turk her leman.”<sup>1</sup>

Spenser was a great admirer of Du Bellay; he translated his *Antiquités de Rome* under the title of *The Ruines of Rome*, and annexed to it the following envoi:—

“Bellay, first garland of free Poësie  
 That France brought forth, though fruitfull of brave wits,  
 Well worthie thou of immortalitie,  
 That long hast traveld, by thy learned writs,

“Il fait bon voir, Magny, ces coions magnifiques,  
 Leur superbe arsenal, leurs vaisseaux, leur abord,  
 Leur S. Marc, leur palais, leur Realte, leur Port,  
 Leurs changes, leurs profits, leur banque, et leurs trafiques,  
 Il fait bon voir le bec de leurs chaprons antiques,  
 Leurs robes à grand' manche, et leurs bonnets sans bord,  
 Leur parler tout grossier, leur gravité, leur port,  
 Et leurs sages advis aux affaires publiques.  
 Il fait bon voir de tout leur senat balloter,  
 Il fait bon voir par tout leurs gondolles flotter.  
 Leurs femmes, leurs festins, leur vivre solitaire:  
 Mais ce que l'on en doit le meilleur estimer,  
 C'est quand ces vieux cocus vont espouser la mer  
 Dont ils sont les maris et le Turc l'adultere.”

Olde Rome out of her ashes to revive,  
 And give a second life to dead decayes!  
 Needes must he all eternitie survive,  
 That can to other give eternall dayes:  
 Thy dayes therefore are endles, and thy praise  
 Excelling all, that ever went before."

The English poet translated twice the French one's *Visions*; first in the year 1569, in blank verse, and the second time in 1591, in rhyme. We give a sonnet of the latter translation, as a sample of a perfect copy by a great master:—

"On high hills top I saw a stately frame,  
 An hundred cubits high by iust assize,  
 With hundredth pillours fronting faire the same,  
 All wrought with diamond after Dorick wize:  
 Nor brick nor marble was the wall in view,  
 But shining christall, which from top to base  
 Out of her womb a thousand rayons threw,  
 One hundred steps of Afrike golds enchase:  
 Golde was the parget; and the seeling bright  
 Did shine all sealy with great plates of golde;  
 The floore of iasp and emeraude was dight.  
 O worlds vainesse! Whiles thus I did behold,  
 An earthquake shooke the hill from lowest seat,  
 And overthrew this frame with ruine great."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Sur la croupe d'un mont je vis une fabrique  
 De cent brasses de haut: cent colonnes d'un rond,  
 Toutes de diamans ornoient le brave front,  
 Et la façon de l'oeuvre estoit à la Dorique,  
 La muraille n'estoit de marbre ni de brique,  
 Mais d'un luisant cristal, qui du sommet au fond,  
 Elançoit mille rais de son ventre profond,  
 Sur cent degrez dorez du plus fin or d'Afrique.  
 D'or estoit le lambris, et le sommet encor  
 Reluisoit escaillé de grandes lames d'or:  
 Le pavé fut de jaspe, et d'esmauraude fine.  
 O vanité du monde! Un soudain tremblement  
 Faisant crouler du mont la plus basse racine,  
 Renverse ce beau lieu depuis le fondement."



And now we have arrived at Ronsard, a native of Vendôme, the greatest of the poets of the Pléiade. His father was "maître d'hôtel" to Francis the First; he himself began life as a page in the service of the Duke of Orleans,<sup>1</sup> whilst the latter travelled in Italy and in England. He may have met Wyatt, and Surrey, and Gabriel Harvey; and indeed there are features in his poems which are not without resemblance to the younger classical school of the English Tudor period. For a while he followed the profession of arms; but at length, resolving to be—what he can hardly be said to have been born—a poet, he gave up the pleasures to which his station entitled him, studied Greek and Latin, and placed himself, in the year 1544, under the care of Jean Daurat, whom, as well as his fellow-student Baïf, he subsequently installed in the Pléiade. No less than seven years were devoted to this arduous second education; the principal aim of which was, no doubt, to amass and arrange a whole dictionary of poetic terms and phrases; to concoct an entire cento of poetic models, in the form which commended itself to the classical judgment of the master, and to the fastidious ear of the pupil. His first poems were not given to the public until the year 1550, at which time not only Joachim du Bellay, but also Jodelle, Remi Belleau, and Pontus de Tyard had already professed their adhesion to the new school of thought, and had made contributions to the poetry of the future. The latest comer of the seven poets known as the Pléiade was destined at once to eclipse his companions, and to add immediate fame to the company of which he was the chosen leader.

The title of the work in which Ronsard made his *début* bears witness to the deliberation with which he had sketched out the plan of his poetic labours: *Les quatre premiers livres des Odes de P. de Ronsard, Vandomois; ensemble son Bocage.*

<sup>1</sup> Charles, third son of the king.

The same purpose appeared yet more clearly in the preface. "If men," says this new aspirant for public favour, in the very first words which he had addressed to the public, "whether in past ages or in the present, have deserved any praise for having diligently followed in the track of those who, running in the career of their originality, have long since passed the goal, how much more ought the runner to be extolled who, riding freely through the Attic and Roman plains, dares to follow an unknown path to immortality! Not, reader, that I am so greedy of glory, or so warped by ambitious presumption that I would force you to give me that which time, it may be, shall bestow; but when you have styled me the first French lyric author, and him who has guided others in the track of so praiseworthy a labour, then you will have rendered me that which you owe me."

This proud appeal was listened to and granted on the spot. For the remainder of his life Ronsard was courted and flattered to the top of his bent. Scarcely, however, had he been laid in the tomb, when his successors, even those who unconsciously owed most to his influence, began to dispute his title to fame. Malherbe ridiculed him, Boileau crushed him with an epigram,<sup>1</sup> Arnault declared that "it was a dishonour to the (French) nation to have valued the pitiable poems of Ronsard." Strange indeed is the fate of the man who, repudiated and neglected in the ages when his influence was virtually paramount, receives a second and fuller appreciation in an age which seeks its poetic inspiration at least in part from the earlier sources which he himself despised. In 1872 his native town erected a monument to "*Pierre de Ronsard, premier Lyrique français.*"

The first four books of Ronsard's Odes were quickly followed by the fifth, which was published in 1552, together with his *Amours*. From that moment he was accepted as

<sup>1</sup> "Réglant tout, brouilla tout, fit un art à sa mode."

the great poet of the day. He was hailed as the Pindar, the Horace, the Petrarch of France ; and the very Academy of *Jeux floraux* which du Bellay had laughed at, sent him, as the most appropriate expression of their regard, a massive silver Minerva. The most illustrious men in the country received him with open arms, and monarchs themselves hastened to show their appreciation of his genius. Marguerite of Savoy accepted the dedication of his *Hymns* in 1555, and of the sequel of his *Amours* in the following year. Mary Stuart, in a similar manner, patronised the first collected edition of his works, and sent him two thousand crowns and a costly piece of plate (1560) ; Queen Elizabeth sent him a diamond of value as a token of her regard. Catherine de Medici publicly thanked him for his *Discourse about the Miseries of these times* (1563), directed against the Calvinists, and suggested to him the publication of his heroic poem the *Franciade* (1572) ; whilst her sons learned his verses by heart, and assigned to him pension after pension. And, greater homage than all, Tasso submitted to his judgment the first outline of the *Jerusalem delivered*. Montaigne himself declared that French poetry had attained its standard, and could not advance beyond Ronsard. In a sense, he was right. Until the nineteenth century, perhaps, it never did. But, on the other hand, there were those amongst the contemporaries of Ronsard who despised, or at least affected heartily to despise him. Mellin de Saint-Gelais, of whom the poet confessed that he had been *tenaillé par sa pince*, called him ironically *le roi des poètes et le poète des rois*, and lost no opportunity of satirising him. Charles Fontaine,<sup>1</sup> who in the *Quintil Horatien* warmly controverted the positions taken up by Du Bellay, was a bitter and persistent enemy of the *immortaliscurs d'eux mêmes*, as he styled the Pléiade, and an enthusiastic, if weak and ineffective champion of the old

<sup>1</sup> 1513-1587.

school. More formidable still, Rabelais flouted the elegant, fastidious, and inflated euphuist, whom he no doubt lampooned in the description of the Limousin scholar who "flayeth the Latin . . . who doth highly Pindarize."<sup>1</sup> Ronsard did not answer Rabelais until after the latter's death, when he wrote an epitaph of which we may hope that he lived to be ashamed. Time wrote another and more pungent epitaph upon them both; for whilst the repute of Rabelais has increased steadily year by year, not a single selection of Ronsard's works was printed between 1630 and 1828, and only a complete edition of all his works in 1857, and the nine following years.

The preponderating opinion, even in the present day, is probably that which an eminent French critic<sup>2</sup> has expressed, not without copious citations in support of his judgment; "Ronsard has no ideas, and he is very poor in sentiment." Let us understand what this implies; for if we understand it in the case of Ronsard we shall have advanced half-way towards an appreciation of the bulk of French poetry—at all events of that produced between the Renaissance and the Revolution.

Rich in sentiment Ronsard undoubtedly was not, because he sternly confined himself to a language whose vocabulary of sentiment was limited—which could indeed most admirably express what had been felt often and of old, by men who had wedded their own fresh ideas to happy words, but which could not supply terms for entirely new experiences, and which could not, therefore, be a medium of originality. It is not necessary to suppose that Ronsard was destitute of original ideas, or that he was incapable of deep sentiment; but he chose deliberately to limit his power of expression, and, as a consequence, he virtually limited his power of

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. bk. iii. ch. 2, page 292.

<sup>2</sup> M. Paul Albert, in *La littérature française des origines à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*.



experience and conception. He selected a sphere wherein to move—a field whose boundaries were marked, and therefore narrow. From that time forward he had cut off from himself all the undiscovered or ignored regions which lay beyond the circumscribed line, not, however, without leaving himself an infinite variety. To say, therefore, that Ronsard had no ideas is inexact; to say that he was poor in sentiment is vague, or at least only relatively true. He had ideas—all the ideas and illustrations of classical authors; and he was able to translate, to imitate, to vary, to recombine these, and to apply them to the circumstances of his own age, with as much freshness and charm as his talent would allow. He had sentiment; and, so far as his literary fashion was concerned, there was no reason why this sentiment should be less forcible or deep than the sentiment of a Sophocles, a Theocritus, a Propertius, or an Ovid. Let us be still more just to the *Pléiade* and their successors; they had open to them as their subject-matter the whole range of human intellect and passion, and if it is necessary to the enjoyment of their readers that they should first be cultivated up to a certain point of refinement and critical taste, yet, this point attained, there can be no reason why the judgment or the feelings of a cultivated man should not be as deeply moved by them as the judgment and feelings of others are moved by writers of greater licence and more startling originality. No doubt Ronsard and his friends pushed to an extreme their reliance upon and imitation of the ancient classical authors, and that to be compelled now-a-days to read their poems as a duty, which their contemporaries read for pleasure, would produce nothing short of nausea. No doubt their verses are stuffed and crammed with classical names, allusions, fables, and illustrations;<sup>1</sup> but this

<sup>1</sup> Ronsard did much to purify and strengthen the French language, as Englishmen in the same age were doing for their own. He himself boasts:—

“ Adonques pour hausser ma langue maternelle  
Indompté de labeur, je travaillai pour elle ;

must not blind us to the fact that the poetry of the Pléiade contains much that is genuinely beautiful, and capable of affording real pleasure to the developed appetite of the nineteenth century.

In short, if you take up Ronsard, or say, such a sample of him as has been presented to us in a carefully edited volume of selections,<sup>1</sup> when you are in the mood for reading his poems, you will, on the whole, like him. What more can be said for ninety-nine out of a hundred poets of the present day? Ronsard's sonnet to his friend Pontus de Tyard, à propos of his critics, is more than dignified and elegant; it is just :—

“ Tyard, I was blamed when I began to write,  
Because I was obscure to ordinary people;  
But now they say that I am the very reverse,  
And that I belie myself by speaking too vulgarly.  
You whose toil learnedly brings to birth  
Undying works, tell me, what should I do?  
Tell me (for you know everything) how am I to please  
This obstinate monster so diverse in judgment.  
When I thunder in my verse, they are afraid to read me;  
When my voice is low, they do nought but malign me.  
Tell me by what bond, power, pinchers, or nails,  
Shall I hold this Proteus, who changes at every turn?  
Tyard, I understand you, we must let him talk,  
And laugh at him, as he laughs at us.”<sup>2</sup>

*Je fis des mots nouveaux, je rappelai les vieux,  
Si bien que son renom je poussai jusqu'aux cieux. . . .  
Et mis la poésie en tel ordre qu'après  
Le Français fut égal aux Romains et aux Grecs.”*

*Poésies choisies de P. de Ronsard, ed. by L. Bécq de Fouquières.*

<sup>2</sup> Tyard, on me blamoit à mon commencement,  
De quoi j'estois obscur au simple populaire;  
Mais on dit aujourd'hui que je suis au contraire,  
Et que je me démens parlant trop basement.  
Toi de qui le labeur enfante doctement  
Des livres immortels, dy-moy, que doy-je faire?  
Dy-moy car tu sais tout) comme doy-je complaire

It is for the poët to write, to influence, to be a “maker” of men by being a maker of words, and, in addition, to let the judgment of the public go by default. Few poets have exerted a greater reflex influence upon their generation and their posterity than Ronsard ; few poets have more remarkably illustrated the capriciousness of the popular judgment.

For expressing the beauties of nature, as well as of art, the characteristic ideas and sentiments of classic language are peculiarly appropriate ; and the muse of Ronsard excels in natural description. There is much life and vigour, much licence even, and freshness, in the *Folatrissime Voyage d'Hercueil*, written to commemorate a picnic at Arcueil in the summer of 1549. Two or three stanzas—shaped in one of the poet's favourite metres—will suffice to convey the peaceful and refined mood in which Ronsard most frequently sat down to write :—

“ Let them lavish, let them scatter  
     The viands  
 With a liberal hand.  
 And the pasties on which the ancient  
     Women of Memphis  
 Feasted the effeminate Roman.

Sweet divine dew  
     From Anjou,  
 Bacchus, save your liquor !  
 The friendship which I feel for thee  
     Is so strong  
 That I have it always in my heart.

A ce monstre testu divers en jugement ?  
 Quand je tonne en mes vers, il a peur de me lire ;  
 Quand ma voix se desenfle, il ne fait qu'en mesdire  
 Dy-moi de quel lien, force, tenaille, ou clous  
 Tiendray-je ce Proté qui se change à tous coups ?  
 Tyard, je t'enten bien, il le faut laisser dire,  
 Et nous rire de luy, comme il se rit de nous.

Never man, until he dies  
 Remains  
 Perfectly happy ;  
 Always with gladness  
 Sadness  
 Is secretly mingled."<sup>1</sup>

There is little or no affectation there ; still less in the following exquisite poem, than which nothing could be more natural, more straightforward, and more genuine in its sentiment. It is dedicated "To Cassandra," and might be addressed, with perfect fitness, to any young and lovely girl to whom one would teach the philosophy of nature.

"Come, darling, let us see if the rose,  
 Which this morning had displayed  
 Her robe of purple to the sun,  
 To-night has not lost  
 The folds of her purpled robe,  
 And her hue, so like your own.

Alas ! see in how short a time  
 Darling, she has upon the earth,  
 Alas ! alas ! suffered her beauties to fall !  
 O Nature, thou very step-mother,  
 Since such a flower only lasts  
 From morning until eve !

Therefore, if you'll believe me, darling,  
 Whilst your years bloom

<sup>1</sup> "Qu'on prodigue, qu'on repande,  
 La viande  
 D'une libérale main,  
 Et les pasts dont l'ancienne  
 Memphienne  
 Festoya le mel Romain.  
 Douce rosée divine  
 Angevine,  
 Bacchus, sauve ta liqueur !

L'amitié que je te porte  
 Est tant forte  
 Que je l'ay tousjours au cœur.  
 Jamais l'homme, tant qu'il meure,  
 Ne demeure  
 Fortuné parfaitement ;  
 Tousjours avec la lyesse  
 La tristesse  
 Se meale secrettement."



In their greenest freshness,  
 Pluck, pluck your youth :  
 Because old age, like this flower,  
 Will make your beauty wither."<sup>1</sup>

In 1572, twenty days after the St. Bartholomew massacre, appeared Ronsard's great epic poem the *Franciade*, on which he had been engaged for many years, and which was intended to sing, in twenty-four books, the mighty deeds of "the race of French kings, descended from Francion, a child of Hector and a Trojan by birth." Only four books, forming an approximate total of five or six thousand verses, appeared, and the death of Charles IX. put a stop to its further publication. Our author himself says—

"If king Charles had lived  
 I would have finished this long work ;  
 As soon as death conquered him,  
 His death vanquished my courage."<sup>2</sup>

But it is possible that want of success may have been the real cause of the non-appearance of the whole, for at the end of the fourth book he candidly confesses that

"The Frenchmen who will read my verses,  
 If they be not Greeks and Romans,  
 Instead of this book will have  
 But a cumbersome weight in their hands."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose,  
 Qui ce matin avait desclose  
 Sa robe de pourpre au Soleil,  
 A point perdu ceste vesprée  
 Les plis de sa robe pourprée  
 Et son teint au vostre pareil.

Las ! voyez comme en peu d'espace,  
 Mignonne, elle a dessus la place  
 Las ! las ! ses beautez laissé cheoir !  
 O vrayment marastre Nature,  
 Puis qu'une telle fleur ne dure  
 Que du matin jusques au soir !

Donc, si vous me croyez, mignonne,

Tandis que vostre âge fleuronne  
 En sa plus verte nouveauté,  
 Cueillez, cueillez, vostre jeunesse ;  
 Comme à ceste fleur la vieillesse  
 Fera ternir vostre beauté."

<sup>2</sup> "Si le roy Charles eust vescu,  
 J'eusse achevé ce long ouvrage ;  
 Si tost que la mort l'eust vaincu,  
 Sa mort me vainquit le courage."

<sup>3</sup> "Les François qui mes vers liront,  
 S'ils ne sont et Grecs et Romains,  
 En lieu de ce livre ils n'auront  
 Qu'un pesant faix entre les mains."

In the *Eglogues*, chiefly published in 1560, Ronsard makes the "first travelling shepherd" speak as follows of Queen Elizabeth and of Mary Stuart :—

"Passing on the other shore, I went to see the English,  
A land right opposite to Gallia's coast ;  
I saw their ocean agitated by the waves,  
I saw their beautiful queen, chaste and virtuous ;  
Around her palace I saw these great lords  
Gentle, handsome and courteous, magnanimous and strong,  
I saw them revere Charles and Catherine,  
Having sworn peace, and thrown their ancient quarrel  
Far to the winds and the waves.  
I saw the Scottish queen, wise and fair,  
Who in body and mind seemed a goddess ;  
Near to her eyes I drew ; but they were two suns,  
Two suns of beauty without peers.  
I saw them dimmed with dewy moisture clear,  
And on their lids a lovely crystal tear,  
Remembering France and her lost sceptre,  
And her first love, passed away like a dream ! " <sup>1</sup>

Ronsard appears also to have been at least poetically inclined to Bacchic celebrations. He does not alone sing often the praises of good wine—we have already seen it in the

<sup>1</sup> " *Passant d'austre costé, j'alloy voir les Anglois,  
Region opposée au rivage gaulois ;  
Je vy leur grande mer en vagues fluctueuse,  
Je vy leur belle royne honneste et vertueuse ;  
Autour de son palais je vy ces grands milords  
Accorts, beaux et courtois, magnanimes et forts.  
Je les vy revere Carlin et Catherine,  
Ayant juré la paix, et jetté bien avant  
La querelle ancienne aux vagues et au vent.  
Je vy des Escossois la royne sage et belle,  
Qui de corps et d'esprit ressemble une immortelle ;  
J'approchay de ses yeux, mais bien de deux soleils,  
Deux soleils de beauté qui n'ont point leurs pareils,  
Je les vy larmoyer d'une claire rosée,  
Je vy d'un beau crystal sa paupière arrosée,  
Se souvenant de France et du sceptre laissé  
Et de son premier feu comme un songe passé. "*

stanzas quoted from *Le Folaterrissime Voyage*—but he has some happy lines in *Le Verre* about a glass which his friend Brinon had given him as a new year's gift, and which he values much more than the "most costly chiselled cup, inlaid with ancient medals, whereof the possessor may have his throat cut ; which, when left as an heirloom, may become the cause of many lawsuits, or with which, in a drinking bout, one may smash the skull of a friend in a moment of excitement." But "a glass," he sings, "bursts as soon as poison is poured into it . . . and, at night, makes of a porter a king." If wine cannot be come at, Ronsard does not object to beer, for in his verses to Queen Elizabeth he describes England, and says :

"But some day the wandering Ceres . . .  
Will arrive tired on thy shore.  
She, instead of wine, shall brew thee a beverage,  
Not burning, nor heady, nor strong,  
Disturbing the brain, and causing death,  
But innocent for the English country,  
Which by Ceres shall be named beer,  
And may be found so pleasant  
That the neighbours shall come to quaff it."<sup>1</sup>

Another quality of Ronsard appears to have been his always keeping his eye on the main chance. In one of his poems<sup>2</sup> he depicts himself in the royal burial vaults of Saint Denis, and looks at the tombs of those kings "who formerly made all France tremble," but of the many who are lying there, "scarcely two or three shall live after their deaths, be-

<sup>1</sup> "Mais quelque jour Cérès la vagabonde . . .  
Doit arriver lassée à ton rivage,  
Qui pour du vin te doit faire un breuvage  
Non corrosif ni violent ni fort,  
Trouble-cerveau ministre de la mort,  
Mais innocent à la province Angloise,  
Et de Cérès sera nommée cervoise,  
Qui se pourra si gracieux trouver,  
Que tes voisins s'en voudront abreuver."

<sup>2</sup> *Le Bocage Royal*, "à la Reine Cathérine de Medicia."

cause these have never been mean towards good authors, and have made them rich." And another time<sup>1</sup> he complains to a friend that though "he has written the most of all Frenchmen; though he has placed the French king in the heavens; though there is no great nobleman in France in whose honour he has not sung again and again, and though his works honour France, he has received nothing for his reward."

It would be wearisome to pass from Ronsard to any detailed notice of his friends and disciples, who shared in his popularity rather by virtue of their nominal connection with him than from their own intrinsic merits. If it is worth while in this age to re-vindicate the claims of the *Pléiade*, the duty is discharged as soon as we have admitted the talent of its leading spirit. Little more is due to that polished sybarite and licentious epigrammatist, the abbé of Notre Dame de Reclus, Mellin de Saint-Gelais. He was a persistent reviler of Ronsard and his school, and clung to the traditions of Marot; but, unlike Marot, he is readable only when he is impure, and exacts the mention of his name simply through the attitude which he maintained towards his greater contemporary. Even if his preference of the style of Marot proves that he had at least a poetic instinct, still the fact remains that he was not a poet. It is true that he was the court poet; corresponding in some respect to the poet-laureates of England; but the least readable of all his verses are those in which he celebrates the marriage or the birth of a prince,<sup>2</sup> or strives to crown with dignity a muse who was nothing if not salacious. It is a circumstance equally creditable both to poet and to poetaster that they became reconciled before their death. To whom we ought to attribute the lion's share of credit may be considered doubtful, when it is under-

<sup>1</sup> *Élégie au Sieur l'Huillier.*

<sup>2</sup> Of such a nature seem to have been some of the duties expected from him as librarian to the king. It is odd that he thought to cast ridicule on Ronsard by styling him "*poète des rois.*"



stood that the basis of the new pact was a profession of admiration on the part of Saint-Gelais for his rival's genius.<sup>1</sup>

It was natural that Ronsard should have many imitators, both during his lifetime and in the age immediately succeeding his death; and these not always servile in their imitation, but men of more or less capacity and inventive talent. Ronsard, like the innovators in every literary epoch—like Wordsworth, Tennyson, Swinburne, to take late and familiar instances—whether we regard him as the source of the novel process and culture, or merely as the first and greatest representative of a style which it was inevitable that his age should have produced, became at once the centre of a numerous school of poets, who all thought and wrote in his own style.<sup>2</sup> We shall frequently have cause to remark on the permanence of the effect produced on French poetry by the Pléiade, even, as already indicated, in the case of those who refused to acknowledge the debt which they owed to it. But in Ronsard's lifetime there was no disinclination to be counted amongst the number of his disciples. One of the best of them was du Bartas,<sup>3</sup> a native of Auch, in Gascony; who exaggerated all the most pedantic qualities of his model, and wrote, amongst other works, a poem which deserves to be called the phrase-book of the neo-classical school. This was the *Semaine, ou Création du Monde*,<sup>4</sup> the marriage-register of science and verse,

<sup>1</sup> Ronsard commemorated the pact in the following lines :—

“ Lance monstre, ce monstre d'ire,	Dressons à notre amitié neuve
Contre toi m'a forcé d'écrire,	Un autel ! J'atteste le fleuve
Et m'élança tout irrité,	Qui des parjures n'a pitié,
Quand d'un vers enfiellé d'iambes	Que ni l'oubli, ni le temps même,
Je vomissais les aigres flambes	Ni faux rapport, ni la mort blême
De mon courage dépité.	Ne dénoueront notre amitié.”

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson, in “The Flower,” aptly, and with some little scorn, expresses the same familiar idea :

All can raise the flower now,  
For all have got the seed.

<sup>3</sup> 1544-1590.

<sup>4</sup> Du Bartas' works have been translated by Joshua Sylvester (1563-1618), under the title of *The Divine Weeks and Works*, and obtained for the latter

written by a Gascon Moses, who, to the minuteness of a Walt Whitman and the unction of a parish-clerk added an occasional dignity superior to anything attained by the abortive epic of his master.<sup>1</sup> Judge of what he was capable, in the first respect, by a brace of untranslatable couplets :

“Apollon porte-jour, Herme guide-navire  
Mercure échelle-ciel, invente-art, aime-lyre.”

And again :

“La guerre vient après, casse-bis, casse-mœurs,  
Rase-forts, verse-sang, brûle-bois, aime-pleurs.”

Another of du Bartas' inventions was the redoubling of syllables, as, for example, “le feu pé-pétillant,” “la peur à qui bat incessamment le flanc ;” and worst of all

“La gentile alouette avec son tire-lire,  
Tire lire aux fâchés, et d'une tire, tire  
Vers le pôle brillant.”<sup>2</sup>

A *Gradus ad Parnassum*, in verse, has one great defect : no schoolboy can make use of it without incurring the blame of plagiarism. If it was not for Ronsard to write an epic, neither was the glory reserved for any one of his immediate followers ; though more than one attempted it. France is still waiting for her grand epopeia !

the epithet of the Silver-tongued. This translation was an early favourite of Milton's. Spenser says also of him

“And after thee (du Bellay) 'gins Bartas hie to raise  
His heavenly Muse, th' Almighty to adore,  
Live, happy spirits ! th' honour of your name,  
And fill the world with never-dying fame !”

<sup>1</sup> *La Franciade*.

<sup>2</sup> Dryden, in the Epistle Dedicatory to *The Spanish Friar*, says, “I remember, when I was a boy, I thought inimitable Spenser a mean poet, in comparison of Sylvester's ‘Dubartas,’ and was wrapt into an ecstasy when I read these lines :

‘Now, when the winter's keener breath began  
To crystalize the Baltic ocean ;  
To glaze the lakes, to bridle up the floods,  
And periwig with snow (wool) the bald-pate woods.’

I am much deceived if this be not abominable lustian ”

## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. THE REFORM OF THE LANGUAGE.

THE anecdote will bear repetition, how, when Henry of Navarre asked Cardinal Duperron why he no longer wrote verses, the latter replied that no one ought to meddle with poetry after a certain gentleman of Normandy, M. de Malherbe. The Cardinal's opinion might not be thought very valuable if it were opposed to that of other contemporary and later critics; but the fact is that it was fully confirmed by men as well entitled to a hearing as Boileau, whose admiration for Malherbe was hardly less warm than that of Ronsard for himself. Posterity has been more unkind to the founder of the *Pléiade* than to his successor; but if it has been something less than just towards Ronsard, it has also modified the exaggeration of Boileau's judgment, and done much to determine the exact place which Malherbe ought to occupy in the annals of French literature. We can judge the poets of the Renaissance calmly after the lapse of three centuries; and it is impossible to come to any other conclusion than that Ronsard was in reality the apostle of the school to which Malherbe belonged; that Malherbe's contempt for his predecessors was not well founded; that Malherbe himself was hardly superior in dignity to du Bartas, and not greatly superior in purity of language to Ronsard; that, in justice, we ought not to stop at Malherbe in our efforts to get back to the sources of the new vigour and elegance imported into the French poetic style towards the close of the sixteenth century, but

that we ought at least to give Ronsard his due for the great services which he rendered to his fellow-countrymen. The fact nevertheless remains that the first of the two was a veritable reformer of the French tongue ; that he was looked up to both by his contemporaries and his successors as the greatest authority of the Renaissance in respect of style and diction ; that he was not merely a self-constituted lawgiver in matters of linguistic propriety, but also a scrupulous, exact, argumentative, and scientific linguist. He was a Norman, with all the Norman's sense of superiority to the South, who made it his boast that he intended to *dégasconner* the Court and the pulpit ; and he was credited with the ability to do what he undertook. It was more by his personal influence, by his living example, that Malherbe succeeded in fulfilling this mission. His fame as a poet rests on a thin volume of verses, of no great dignity or loftiness of aim ; consisting, indeed, for the most part of odes to the royal family, and to the more influential of the courtiers. One cannot but feel tempted to doubt the reality of Malherbe's influence on the language of his country, and to refuse him the post of honour which Frenchmen have assigned to him. Yet when we come to read his choicest morsels, to study and appreciate the secret of his charm and the subtlety of his beauty, we are obliged to confess that the French language contained nothing before him more genuinely polished and sublime.

Malherbe<sup>1</sup> was in his thirtieth year when Ronsard died. He had already become known as an acute, if somewhat caustic and acrimonious critic. He openly laughed at the *Pléiade*, and professed a supreme contempt for their stilted and pretentious works ; and to the day of his death he could never restrain a sarcasm at their expense, even when he found himself in the presence of one of the oldest and best of the school. Desportes,<sup>2</sup> whose muse was at least elegant, har-

<sup>1</sup> 1555-1628.

<sup>2</sup> 1546-1606.



monious, and simple, was one day entertaining the critic at dinner. With the eagerness of an author he rose from the table for the purpose of presenting his guest with a copy of his *Psalms*. "Never mind, never mind," said Malherbe, "your soup is better than your Psalms." The younger poet was not justified in so thoroughly repudiating the school from which he undoubtedly learned many lessons and adopted many traditions. His attachment to the classical mythology of Greece and Rome was hardly less close than that of Ronsard. He can rarely avoid a comparison between the subjects of his personal odes and a more or less obscure character borrowed from the ancients. Even in the metrical form of his verses he is largely indebted to Ronsard, and especially so in the twelve-syllable lines which have since become a characteristic of French poetry. In the painstaking elaboration of his poems, in the conscientious labour by day and by night, he was undoubtedly a disciple of his predecessor, or rather of the clear-sighted Joachim du Bellay, whose *Défense et Illustration* was one of those happy predictions which tend inevitably to fulfil themselves. Never was a poet more stolidly deliberate than Malherbe; though it may be doubted whether his best verses were those which cost him the longest thought. It was certainly not so with an ode which cost him a year's labour, addressed to the President of Verdun, intended to console the latter for the loss of his wife, but which reached its destination only after the afflicted husband had sought an alleviation of his grief in a second marriage.

The criticisms of Malherbe are by no means lost to posterity. His friend Racan and his enemy Regnier have transmitted much that gives us a fair insight into the method and the spirit of the man, to whom a dispute on a question of grammar was scarcely less attractive than a poetical conception. But a still more interesting monument of his critical powers exists in an old volume of Desportes, printed in 1600.

and copiously annotated by Malherbe in 1606. The poet had been stung by the satires of Regnier, and by the sarcasms of the friends of Desportes, and he exclaimed: "If I set myself to work I will make of their faults a bigger book even than their own!" He fulfilled his threat, and the volume, which passed into the hands of Guez de Balzac, and bears his attestation, is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris—one of the most curious literary documents in the French language.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting not simply as the record of a hotly-contested literary struggle, but more specially because it affords a measure and example of Malherbe's critical acumen, and shows us by what means, and with what degree of minuteness, he accomplished his work of reformation. In some respects his task was rudimentary enough, as where he has to correct the actual bad grammar of Desportes, or to pronounce against identical syllables made to do duty for rhyme. But his fastidious taste went much farther than this, detecting cacophonies in every shape and form, protesting

<sup>1</sup> M. Alphonse Pagès, in his *Grands Écrivains Français*, has given a detailed illustration of the volume. We may borrow from him the following example of Malherbe's annotations. Desportes has these lines, taken at random:—

"Où j'étais attendu d'une puissante armée . . .  
 Ma dame Amour. Fortune, et tous les clemens . . .  
 O songe ! ange divin, sorcier de mes tourmens . . .  
 Et si dedans le feu, tes louanges je chante . . .  
 . . . Mon œil aussi, larme à larme repand . . .  
 Mais, hélas ! ta faveur de moy s'est departie . . .  
 Et lorsque, par raison, je tache à la domter . . .  
 Que l'unique beauté qui mon ame a ravie . . .  
 De mesme, en mes douleurs, j'ayoy pris esperance . . .  
 Si la foy plus certaine en une ame non fainte . . .  
 Vous pourrez bien juger mon amour estre extrême . . .  
 Mais vous, belle tyranne aux Nérons comparable . . .  
 Toujours foible et pesante en terre est arrestée." . . .

In the margin of each of these lines the purist has written:—"Du, du—ma, da, ma, mour—geon, je—ge, je, chan—lar, ma, la—la, ta, fa—ta, cha, la—na, na, ra—né, men, mes—nen, nu, na—trea, tre—tira, na, ne—tes, terrest, tarrest."

against many barbarous words, not without sufficient justification, and providing a hundred useful hints for a new art of poetry. Be it observed, however, that Malherbe might fare badly enough if his own poems were subjected to the same kind of hypercriticism as he bestowed upon Desportes,<sup>1</sup> and that it is only when we take him at his best that he so far excels the best work of his predecessors.

Let us see Malherbe at his best. He wrote nothing more touching, more finished and harmonious, than certain of the stanzas addressed by way of consolation to M. du Perrier, a Provençal friend who had lost his only daughter. Read two in the original, and say if they are not worthy of a master's hand :—

“ Je sçay de quels appas son enfance estoit pleine,  
Et n'ay pas entrepris,  
Injurieux ami, de soulager ta peine  
Avecque son mépris.

Mais elle estoit du monde, où les plus belles choses  
Ont le pire destin ;  
Et, rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses,  
L'espace d'un matin.”

If we cut out from this copy of verses the inevitable classical illustration, there is nothing in it which does not come genuinely from the heart, yet rounded and polished, without being impaired, as a gem is made more exquisite by the cunning of the lapidary. Malherbe had, in fact, lost a daughter

<sup>1</sup> Thus he blames Desportes for admitting rhymes in the middle of his rhymes. Yet in the very first of his stanzas in honour of the king (1605) he has :—

“ O Dieu, dont les bontez, de nos larmes touchées,  
Ont aux vaines fureurs les armes arrachées.”

And in the same piece we could point out cacophonies as unpleasant as many of those which he has detected in Desportes. For instance :—

“ Par sa fatale main qui vengera nos pertes  
L'Espagne pleurera ses provinces désertes.”

and a son in their youth, and he is able to write of his loss in this strain :—

“For me, already twice have I been maimed  
By the like fire from heaven,  
And twice has reason fortified my soul  
That I lament no more.

“Yet it is pain to me, because the tomb  
Owns what I held so dear ;  
But that which knows no remedy should be  
Devoid of idle plaint.

“Death has his cruel terrors unsurpass’d ;  
In vain we sue for grace,  
The harsh oppressor shuts his ruthless ears,  
And lets his victims sue.

“The wretch half-shelter’d by his roof of straw  
Is subject to his will ;  
No faithful guard who stands at Louvre’s gates  
Can shield the heads of kings.”<sup>1</sup>

An undercurrent of deep feeling appears to have existed in Malherbe’s character, for when his son was killed in a duel he tried to obtain vengeance on the murderer from the king

<sup>1</sup> “De moy, déjà deux fois d’une pareille foudre,  
Je me suis ven perclus,  
Et deux fois la raison m’a si bien fait resoudre  
Qu’il ne m’en souvient plus.

“Non qu’il ne me soit grief que la tombe possède  
Ce qui me fut si cher ;  
Mais en un accident qui n’a point de remède,  
Il n’en faut point chercher.

“La mort a des rigueurs à nulle autre pareilles ;  
On a beau la prier,  
La cruelle qu’elle est se bouche les oreilles,  
Et nous laisse crier.

“Le pauvre en sa cabane, où le chaume le couvre,  
Est sujet à ses loix ;  
Et la garde qui veille aux barrières du Louvre  
N’en défend pas nos Rois.”



and the Church, and wished to send a challenge himself. According to some commentators he would have accepted a shameful pecuniary compensation,<sup>1</sup> but he died a few months after his child.

One of the most striking beauties of Malherbe's verse consists of the epigrammatic force with which he every now and then introduces some moral and sententious maxim, which is always apposite, never hard or pedantic. What could be finer than the one already quoted?—

“Mais elle estoit du monde, où les plus belles choses  
Ont le pire destin.”

Or this, in which he expresses the same feelings as Ronsard in lines which we have already quoted :<sup>2</sup>

“Je vais bien éprouver qu'un déplaisir extrême  
Est toujours à la fin d'un extrême plaisir.”

Or again :

“Quant à moy je dispute avant que je m'engage,  
Mais quand je l'ay promis j'aime éternellement.”

We can understand the full satisfaction with which his fellow-countrymen, refined by something like a century of the developed culture of the Renaissance, would read and dwell upon his poems ; we can appreciate the depth of meaning in those three oft-quoted words of Boileau : *Enfin Malherbe vint !*

## § 2. MALHERBE'S OPPONENTS AND FOLLOWERS.

More admirable for his genius than lovable in his personal relations, Malherbe was a bitter and pugnacious enemy

<sup>1</sup> Poésies de F. Malherbe, ed. L. Becq de Fouquières, Introduction, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See the last stanza, page 46.

to all who disputed his judgment or threatened to rival his fame. A modern French critic<sup>1</sup> has not done ill in comparing his literary zeal with the religious zeal of Calvin. The Protestant reformer of religion proscribed ornaments, images, pictures; all the relaxations whereby the Church sought to fascinate and govern humanity. The Catholic reformer of language, in the same overbearing and ruthless spirit, set his face against the careless, unstudied rhymes and metres of his predecessors, "hating the freethinkers of literature as much as Calvin hated the freethinkers of religion." We have seen how rancorous he could be to men like Ronsard and Desportes. If the question at issue had been the love of God, instead of the cultivation of the Muses, he might have banished them, as Calvin banished Castalion, or burnt them, as Calvin burnt Servetus. As it was, perhaps his cruelty was equally great. It was great enough in the case of Desportes to raise up a redoubtable champion of the latter in the person of his nephew, Mathurin Regnier,<sup>2</sup> a man of intellectual force and genius, not unworthy to be classed with Villon and Marot. He personified the counter-reaction which set in against Malherbe's almost indiscriminate condemnation of the past; the counter-revolt of the easier, and, let us add, the less robust spirit of the age against Malherbe's fastidious severity. Hear him in an extract from a satire against Malherbe, written to his friend Rapin, one of the authors of the *Satire Ménippée*:—

"However, their knowledge extends only  
 To eliminate a word doubtful in their judgment;  
 To take heed lest a *qui* stumbles against a diphthong,  
 To spy whether the rhyme be short or long;  
 Or again whether one vowel occurring next to another

<sup>1</sup> Lénient, *La Satire en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

<sup>2</sup> 1573-1613. Regnier wrote in all 17 *Satires*, 3 *Épîtres*, 5 *Épigrammes*, and several other pieces of poetry, as well as a goodly number of epigrams.

Does not cause the verse to halt to the ear ;  
 And neglect the nobility of the work :  
 No divine stimulus elevates their spirit :  
 They creep meanly, weak of invention,  
 And, wanting in boldness, dare not apply themselves to fiction.”<sup>1</sup>

Mathurin Regnier was at his uncle's dinner-table when Malherbe, with more wit than kindness, vaunted the latter's soup above his verses. Perhaps the grain of justice contained in this rude speech stung the nephew more than the outrage done to his uncle's feelings. Perhaps his ardent mind—of which he said himself that “it was in flames day and night, that it only brought forth fire and only breathed love”—set on edge by loose living and a certain habit of licence, produced a natural revulsion against the harshly-exercised authority of the young pedant. At all events,

<sup>1</sup> “Cependant leur sçavoir ne s'étend seulement  
 Qu' à regrater un mot douteux au jugement  
 Prendre garde qu'un *qui* ne heurte une diptongue,  
 Epier si des vers la rime est brève ou longue,  
 Ou bien si la voyelle à l'autre s'unissant,  
 Ne rend point à l'oreille un vers trop languissant,  
 Et laissent sur le verd le noble de l'ouvrage :  
 Nul eguillon divin n'esleve leur courage,  
 Ils rampent bassement foibles d'inventions,  
 Et n'osent, peu hardis tanter les fictions.”

There is spirit and sense here, but perhaps none of the Ronsardists whom Malherbe had so heartily castigated ever wrote ten verses with only a single faultless rhyme. Another of Malherbe's antagonists, not much known for any special virtues peculiar to himself, Courval Sonnet, criticises him in much the same style, and lays himself open to the same strictures as Regnier :—

“ Ils disent que Malherbe ampoule trop son style  
 Supplément coutumier d'une veine infertile,  
 Et qu'ayant travaillé deux mois pour un sonnet,  
 Il en demeure quatre à le remettre au net ;  
 Que ses vers ne sont pleins que de paroles vaines,  
 Et de la vanité qui bout dedans ses veines ;  
 Qu'il est plat pour le sens et la conception,  
 Et pour le faire court, pauvre d'invention.”

The weak points of Malherbe were plainly stereotyped in the language of his opponents.

Regnier forthwith began to attack Malherbe with all the bitterness of which his satirical mood was capable, and never let him rest again. We have seen how Regnier could sting his adversary ; we have seen how rancorous Malherbe could become. And yet it cannot but strike us as a pitiable mistake, born of the insane literary jealousies and hatreds which too faithfully copied the religious animosities of the century, that genuine poets such as Malherbe and Regnier were should have found themselves thus pitted against each other. Let us accept the acute literary judgment of M. Lénient upon this episode of the classical Renaissance, expressed as it is with a force and point which it would be difficult to surpass :—<sup>1</sup> "The wars of poets, like civil and religious wars, have at times remarkable issues. Who, for instance, would have expected that the learned and pedantic Muse of the *Pléiade* would have for its last champion Regnier, descendant of Marot and Rabelais ? And it was he, the reckless roysterer, the railing rhymster, who day after day, in questionable company, squandered his wit, his health, and his money, who was to be charged with the defence of the common heritage of the ancients, of Pindar, Tasso, Virgil, Ronsard, and the rest. And against whom ? Against Malherbe, against the most sober, circumspect, sedate spirit that ever breathed amongst the poets. Faithful to his old Greek, Latin, French, Italian masters, Regnier undertook to avenge them on the hypercriticism of these disdainful modern writers."<sup>2</sup>

Of course Malherbe, the purist in language, the oracle of good sense, who was to be for two centuries the model of French poets, who, in particular, fathered the modern ode in

<sup>1</sup> *La Satire en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 559.

<sup>2</sup> We give Regnier's epitaph, written by himself :—

<p>" J'ai vécu sans nul pissement, Me laissant aller doucement A la bonne loy naturelle,</p>	<p>Et ne scaurois dire pourqoy La mort daigna penser à moy Qui n'ay daigné penser en elle."</p>
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as true a sense as that in which Horace created the Latin alcaic and sapphic metre, was not without his school in his own lifetime. He lived long enough to see his teaching bear fruit, and to find his principles insisted on by as many disciples as those who had followed in the steps of Ronsard. Perhaps the strongest and most worthy of them all was Racan,<sup>1</sup> whom the poet-grammarians found to be a pupil after his own heart, and who has left us a short biography of his master.<sup>2</sup> Racan was indeed the Boswell of a French Johnson, who danced attendance on the old pedant as he sat at his meals, and who thankfully picked up the crumbs which fell from the lips of the literary giant. A hundred anecdotes and speeches might be culled from the pages of Racan's *Life of Malherbe*, which would compare very favourably with the ingenious effusiveness of the gossip Scotchman. Take a single utterance of Malherbe, which has the true ring of the Boswellian Johnson :—

“ Sir, be assured that, if our verses live after us, all the glory for which we can hope is that they shall call us two excellent arrangers of syllables ; that we had a great power over words, for the placing of them fitly, each in its order, and that we were both great asses to spend the best part of our lives in an exercise so little serviceable to the public and to ourselves.”

Racan was a man of small fortune, or rather, like his Scotch counterpart, a man of good birth and better expectations, who cultivated the Muses as an elegant occupation, and through a sincere and imitative admiration of his chosen guide and friend. Malherbe tyrannised over him ; rated and bullied him ; would not let him marry, that he might keep him continually at his side. The scholar—for that was the word

<sup>1</sup> 1589-1670.

<sup>2</sup> Another, less interesting because less unreservedly appreciative, is extant from the hand of Tallemant des Réaux.

which Malherbe delighted to apply to all who called him friend.—was not, however, far behind his master in the talent which he displayed for correct and polished versification. He did not indeed merit the eulogies which his immediate successors heaped upon him.<sup>1</sup> Even Malherbe used to call his favourite pupil “a heretic in verse;” and he was too much of a dilettante to succeed thoroughly in a task which required great and well-sustained efforts. His best work was *Les Bergeries*, a sort of pastoral dialogue, in which the poet vainly attempted to harmonise the classical severity to which he had been trained with the natural freedom which the choice of such a subject seemed to promise. There are some fine passages in this work; especially those which strike the chord of Racan’s genuine love of rural life and retirement.<sup>2</sup> But, on the whole, *Les Bergeries* is commonplace and mawkish, with little elevation and abundance of platitude. This, a few stiff

<sup>1</sup> Boileau wrote :—

“ Sur un ton si hardi, sans être téméraire  
Racan pourroit chanter à défaut d’un Homère.”

And La Fontaine :—

“ Malherbe avec Racan parmi le chœur des anges,  
Là-haut de l’Éternel célébrant les louanges  
Ont emporté leur lyre.”

<sup>2</sup> The following stanzas are perhaps the best that could be selected :—

“ Roi de ses passions, il d’homme a ce qu’il desire,  
Son fertile domaine est son petit empire;  
Sa cabane est son Louvre et son Fontainebleau.  
Ses champs et ses jardins sont autant de provinces;  
Et sans porter envie à la pompe des princes  
Se contente chez lui de les voir en tableau. . . .

“ S’il ne possède point ces maisons magnifiques,  
Ces tours, ces chapiteaux, ces superbes portiques,  
Où la magnificence étale ses attraits,  
Il jouit des beautés qu’ont les saisons nouvelles,  
Il voit de la verdure et des fleurs naturelles,  
Qu’en ces riches lambris on ne voit qu’en portrait.”

The antithesis at least is fine; and the rest, if said elsewhere and better, is more than respectable.

odes, and a lamentable version of the *Psalms* of David, "accommodated to the present time," of which the less said the better, constitute the foundation of Racan's fame.

Another of Malherbe's disciples was François Maynard,<sup>1</sup> president of the district of Aurillac; of whom the master of the school, whose judgment of his friends, as of his enemies, became stereotyped as soon as it was uttered, said that he was the best maker of verses, but that he lacked power. The condemnation was a grave one, but it was deserved; and the sense of his powerlessness was an ever-present burden on the mind of the mediocre poet. What but a sensible want of power could have dictated this verse to a man as his own epitaph?—

"Repelled by the great and by fate,  
Wearied with expectation and complaining,  
Here I await death,  
Without wishing for it or fearing it."<sup>2</sup>

Poor, sighing in the provinces for fame and for wealth, without the energy or the ability to conquer his adversity, and without the contentment to be happy where his lot had cast him—what could we wish better for such a man than that he had never been able to write a verse which Malherbe could have praised? As it is, almost every one of his verses is charged with a wearisome complaint, until the monotony becomes so great that we can neither admire the poetry nor pity the grumbler.

Racan's *Les Bergeries* were dedicated to Honoré d'Urfé.<sup>3</sup> A prose-romancist rather than a poet, an adapter and dramatiser of Italian pastoral stories, d'Urfé was still imbued with

<sup>1</sup> 1582-1646.

<sup>2</sup> "Rebuté des grands et du sort,  
Las d'espérer et de me plaindre,  
C'est ici que j'attends la mort,  
Sans la désirer ni la craindre."

<sup>3</sup> 1568-1625.

much of the spirit of Malherbe, and was a genuine literary reformer ; not merely of the language, but also of the tone and spirit of French literature. In particular, he rehabilitated and made once more popular the old chivalrous traditions of his country. His masterpiece, *l'Astrée*, the work by which he is known and remembered, was a romance first published in 1609, continued in 1616, further extended three years later, and completed from the posthumous papers of the author in 1627. It had a remarkable success ; the new *genre* surprised and delighted its readers ; it was a return to nature which moved the sensibilities of men and women in a manner which can be compared to nothing else than the reception, a hundred and fifty years later, of Rousseau's *Emile* and *Nouvelle Héloïse*. It inspired the pastoral drama of Racan, provided subjects for the brush of Poussin, created, both in France and abroad, a school of hysterical romance which took the hero and heroine of the novel as their model and their *beau idéal*. François de Sales called it the "courtier's breviary ;" Bishop Camus declared that the memory of the author was as sweet to him as a breath of perfume ; Bishop Huet dreaded to reopen the book, lest he should be compelled to read it over again, "as by a kind of enchantment." Boileau extolled it in spite of himself ; La Fontaine boasted that he had read it over and over again. We cannot attempt to describe the plot ; the *longs ambages* which extend over five successive portions of the romance, eagerly as they were anticipated and devoured by the author's contemporaries, would only weary the reader. The story had a moral which commended itself to all—a moral which, to revert to our comparison, is not unlike that which, in the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau set himself to inculcate.<sup>1</sup> Nor does it seem worth while to cite so much of the original as would illustrate the method by

<sup>1</sup> The full title of the book was : — *l'Astrée, ou par plusieurs histoires et sous personnes de bergers et d'autres sont deduits les divers effets de l'honnête amitié.*



which this worthy aim of d'Urfé was accomplished. Rather let us be satisfied with a short specimen of the vivid appreciation of nature's beauty which shines conspicuously in every other page of this pastoral romance. He is but describing his native country, le Forez, which is made the scene of his story ; and yet what might well have been a commonplace list of towns, rivers, and mountains, acquires grace from the loving touches of the writer, whose prose has all the adornment and delicacy of verse :—

“Not far from the ancient town of Lyons, on the side of the setting sun, there is a district named Forez, which, small as it is, contains that which is very rare throughout the rest of Gaul ; for, the district being divided between plains and mountains, both of these are so fertile, and lie in so temperate a clime, that the soil is capable of all that the labourer can desire. In the heart of the country is the finest part of the plain, surrounded, as by a strong wall, with neighbouring hills, and watered by the river Loire, which, having its source at no great distance, passes almost through the midst, not as yet too swollen and proud, but gentle and peaceful. Several other streams, in various directions, bathe it as they pass with their clear waves, but one of the finest of all is the Lignon, which, wandering in its course as it is uncertain in its origin, goes winding through this plain from the high mountains of Cervières and Chalmazel as far as Feurs, where the Loire receiving it, and depriving it of its own name, carries it as a tribute to the ocean.”

And again :

“Lignon, fair and pleasant river, on whose banks I have so happily spent my infancy and the most tender portion of my early youth, whatever recompense my pen may have given thee, I confess that I am still greatly indebted to thee for so much pleasure that I have received along thy margin, under the shade of thy leafy trees and in the freshness of thy lovely waters, when the innocence of my life permitted me to rejoice, and to appreciate, in repose, the fortune and felicity which heaven, with a

liberal hand, scattered over this happy country which thou waterest with thy clear and living waves."

With poets such as Malherbe, and prose writers such as Honoré d'Urfé, the French language had attained its majority ; or rather it had added a crowning grace and elegance to the nervous strength with which Calvin had endowed it. The work of the Renaissance was complete ; for though thought and fancy were to embellish French literature with the richest spoils of human genius, the language was hardly capable of further development, and the master-minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were to express themselves in terms which the seventeenth century had unmistakably stamped as the classical standard of speech.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. THE THEATRE OF THE RENAISSANCE.

WE have already had occasion to notice how distinctly, about the middle of the sixteenth century, the character and spirit of the Renaissance appeared to change ; how, as it were, a second Renaissance was developed out of the first ; how the new birth of ideas and fancies, overflowing in the minds of a suddenly emancipated generation, gave place to a later birth of forms and combinations of ideas ; how, in short, the Classical Renaissance to some extent replaced and superseded the chaotic medley of ill-regulated conceptions amidst which the century opened. We have seen how the school of Marot yielded before the schools of Ronsard and Malherbe, how the rondeau and the *virolai* and the ballad were discarded in favour of the ode and the epistle. It can hardly surprise us that the development of the drama in France was precisely synchronous with the development of song, and that the Muse of comedy and tragedy walked step by step with the Muse of lyric poetry. So nearly identical are the dates of these two characteristic changes, that the earliest plays of Jodelle, the father of French classic tragedy, were acted for the first time in the very years when Joachim du Bellay printed his *Défense et Illustration*, and Ronsard the first edition of his poems.

It was in 1548 that the Parliament of Paris laid its interdiction on the mysteries and passion-plays. A couple of

years had not passed before the stage was supplied with the first essays of a drama infinitely higher in its aims and its capabilities, and destined to spring with remarkable quickness into popularity and repute. Comparatively feeble as were the tragedies of Jodelle, they created a new dramatic era, and were received with the favour which his countrymen are never slow to manifest towards any new departure in the march of ideas. "The scorn which, in France more than in any other country, to-day has for yesterday, and which to-morrow in its turn will have for to-day," as a French critic<sup>1</sup> has shrewdly observed, turned its back forthwith upon the old moralities, and even upon the *soties* and farces of the past, and welcomed with eagerness the classic imitations of Greek and Latin dramatists. And if imitation was, during more than half-a-century, to do duty for originality, still we must remember that the invention of the previous epoch had rarely extended beyond the domain of allegory, and that the slow discipline of imitation was needed before the classic drama could become fairly accustomed to its modern dress.

No doubt it was to the Pléiade itself, say rather to the spirit evoked by, or at least embodied in, the appeal of Joachim du Bellay, that the inauguration of the classic drama in France was due. Lazare de Baïf,<sup>2</sup> the father of the better-known poet Jean Antoine de Baïf,<sup>3</sup> a natural son, was at the pains of literally translating the *Electra*, *Heccuba*, and *Iphigenia*, whilst his son's great friend, Ronsard himself, translated the *Plutus* of Aristophanes. Etienne Jodelle was, however, the first of the school to compose plays for actual representation; and as he found no theatre nor actors ready to his hand, he obtained from Henry II. the use of the courtyard in the Hôtel de Reims, and played in his own pieces. In this he was assisted by his friends, Remi Belleau, Jean de

<sup>1</sup> M. Saint-Marc Girardin, *Littérature du Moyen-Âge*. "Du théâtre au commencement du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," ch. iii. p. 365.    <sup>2</sup> 1490-1547.    <sup>3</sup> 1552-1589.



la Peruse, and others ; the king patronised and subsidised his theatre, and the success of his venture was assured. His first tragedies, *Cléopâtre Captive* and *Didon*, were followed, in 1552, by a comedy *Eugène*, which was even more favourably received ; and the literary giant of the day, Ronsard, crowned the triumph of his young pupil with extravagant praise.<sup>1</sup>

Very different, of course, were the stage and accessories of Jodelle's theatre from the old cathedral porches, or even the *puy*s of Adam de la Halle and his friends. The courtyard of a palace was by no means an unpromising place for the representation of plays which aimed at literary merit almost more than dramatic force, and which may have seemed to be appropriately surrounded by the substantial architecture and adornments of a venerable pile of stone. There would be room in the Hôtel de Reims for the erection of a spacious stage, and for all the conveniences requisite to a company of ambitious amateurs, who had royalty and the court amongst their spectators. On three sides of the spacious square the boxes stood ready for their occupants, who from the windows of the various storeys could enjoy the play at their ease, with as much satisfaction to themselves as those who, in the present day, occupy the boxes of the best-appointed theatres. Luxury had made sufficient advance, by the middle of the

<sup>1</sup> Jodelle (1532-1573) was less than twenty years old when he began to write and act. Ronsard wrote of him in this style :—

“ Jodelle, le premier, d'une plainte hardie  
 Françaisement chanta la grecque tragédie,  
 Puis en changeant de ton, chanta devant nos rois  
 La jeune comédie en langage françois,  
 Et si bien les sonna que Sophocle et Ménandre  
 Tant fussent-ils savants, y eussent pu apprendre.”

And again :

“ Et lors Jodelle heureusement sonna  
 D'une voix humble et d'une voix hardie  
 La comédie avec la tragédie,  
 Et d'un ton double, ores bas, ores hault,  
 Remplit premier le françois eschaffault.”

sixteenth century, to enable persons of wealth and rank keenly to appreciate the pleasure of lounging for two or three hours, on a warm summer's day, on soft cushions in the seat of an open window, idly looking on at the exhibition of a well-written, well-acted comedy or tragedy. The art of the Renaissance, too, would be equal to the task of setting-off a court-drama with effect; and no doubt there was more or less painted scenery of a very picturesque kind on the stage. One word, in fact, would express the whole of the great advance made by the theatre within the preceding century: it was an advance in *form*. Stage accessories of every kind, histrionic art, dramatic art, the appearance and the cultivation of the audience—all betokened this characteristic and universal development. Next to the literary style of the plays, nothing would betoken this more strikingly than the figures which could be seen through the mullioned framework of the palace windows. Catherine de Medici had not come to France for nothing; and her influence was nowhere more conspicuous than in the outward bearing of her court. We can imagine what her children must have looked like on occasions of ceremony and pageantry, in their Italianised dress, with their Italianised air and graces. Or, if we cannot imagine it, the satires of Regnier and his contemporaries enable us to form a fairly accurate notion.

## § 2. JOELLE AND HIS FRIENDS.

The theatre of the Renaissance soon looked beyond the court, and beyond the ranks of fashionable society, for its support; but, look where it would, the only possible audience was one which demanded and appreciated a classical drama; a drama, that is to say, written in the purified and dignified style which

Ronsard had made indispensable, charged with allusions to Greek and Latin mythology, and choosing its subjects either directly from Greek and Latin history, or else in imitation of ancient classical models. This must at all events have been so during the lifetime of Jodelle and his immediate successors ; and a hundred years later the freest and most sparkling of French farces retained more or less of the classical balance of thought and expression. It may be questioned whether any French comedy or farce of the sixteenth century can be said to show a deliberate effort to escape from the groove into which the drama was brought by the students of Terence and Aristophanes. The *Farce de Pathelin* would have been an impossibility for any dramatic author between the year 1500 and Molière. And certainly no French tragedy, from Jodelle to the present century, could be even so much as attempted on any other than a classical model.

A glance at *Cléopâtre Captive* will suffice to show both its own meagre quality and its conscientious affectation of the form of the regular Greek drama, Pindaric rather than Sophoclean, as might have been expected from a disciple of Ronsard's. It is written in iambic verse, alternately of five and six feet, with an occasional chorus of Alexandrian women, duly separated into strophe, antistrophe, and epode. To begin with, the ghost of Anthony relates the circumstances of his death ; after which Cleopatra<sup>1</sup> tells her confidantes how she has seen the aforesaid ghost ; whereupon the chorus laments the fickleness of fate. Octavian and his friends now discuss the like topic from a similar point of view ; and Octavian expresses a desire to carry off the Egyptian queen ; whereupon the chorus laments the evils of pride. Cleopatra tries in vain to soften Octavian ; when Seleucus, an Egyptian, informs the Roman that his mistress has concealed a large treasure. Cleopatra strikes Seleucus ; whereupon the chorus

<sup>1</sup> The part of Cleopatra was taken by Jodelle.

bewails the vicissitudes of fortune. Cleopatra meditates death : the chorus compares the current evils to a hail-storm ; the Queen apostrophises Anthony's ghost at great length . whereupon the chorus condole with her. Proculeius informs Octavian of the death of Cleopatra ; whereupon the chorus laments, saying :

“ O stern mishap ! mishap, alas, too stern !

Thousand times stern, and thousand times too stern ! ”<sup>1</sup>

This was all ; and it was enough. There is not more plot —though there is generally more circumstance—in a play of Sophocles or Æschylus ; but in the latter the language more than justifies the absence of action from the stage. The same thing can hardly be said for Jodelle. Yet his success need not surprise us. The boldness and novelty of his endeavour to revive the classical drama naturally elicited the enthusiasm of his contemporaries : of scholars and critics, as well as of the idlers of the court. Pasquier<sup>2</sup> relates how *Cleopatra* was acted “ before King Henry II. at Paris, at the Hôtel de Reims, with great applause from the whole company ; and again afterwards at the college of Boncourt, where all the windows were lined with a large number of persons of position, and the court was so full of scholars that the gates were choked by them. I speak as one who was present, in the same room with the great Turnebus ; and the performers were all men of standing.” So elated were the actors with their triumph, that, as soon as the first representation was over, they went in a body to Arcueil, and there celebrated the event by some such literary *fête champêtre* as the one which Ronsard commemorates in his *Folatrissime Voyage* to the very same village ; at the same time crowning a stag with ivy and flowers in honour of Thespis.

<sup>1</sup> “ O dure, hélas ! et trop dure aventure !

Mille fois dure, et mille fois trop dure ! ”

<sup>2</sup> *Recherches sur la France*, vii. ch. 6.



There was less of originality in Jodelle than in Ronsard ; and still less of poetry or dignity of expression. And yet Jodelle, like Ronsard, founded a school, or rather opened up for his successors a new and grand career of literary activity. This is his title to the gratitude of posterity ; he was the first to write what might otherwise have been delayed for another quarter of a century, but what must have been written before many years had elapsed. In this sense he may be named in the same breath with Ronsard, and in this sense only ; although he himself aspired to be rather a rival than a disciple of his master. “One day,” he says, “it occurred to me that if a Ronsard excelled a Jodelle in the morning, a Jodelle might excel a Ronsard in the afternoon.” For a moment he seemed to vie with the leader of the Pléiade in public estimation ; but the feebleness of his talent found a counterpart in the feebleness of his character ; and he wrecked his chances of a grander success by his own improvidence and impatience. His catastrophe was at once pitiable and ludicrous. He had undertaken to provide a mask for the entertainment of Henry II., on the return of the latter from the expedition during which Calais was regained from the English. Jodelle—who had greatly deteriorated by the effects of dissolute living and slipshod work—represented Jason on board the *Argo* ;—he forgot his part, and could not extract himself from the difficulty. Presently Orpheus came upon the stage, singing the praises of Henry, and drawing the rocks and trees behind him. But unfortunately the machinists had misread their directions, and in place of *rochers* they had supplied *clochers*. The mask was brought to an end amidst a storm of laughter : the king was annoyed, and Jodelle never recovered the disgrace. He died at the age of forty, the latter half of his life having been virtually barren of literary achievement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of his friends wrote of him, with more bitterness than accuracy :

“Jodelle est mort de pauvreté :

La pauvreté a eu puissance

The matter of Jodelle's comedy, *l'Eugène*, is better than that of his tragedy. It attacks one of the great abuses of the Church, more or less present in every age and under every form of creed, and destined to create a scandal, in France particularly, of the most gigantic proportions; the worldly life and self-indulgence of the wealthy clergy. His hero Eugène is an *abbé commandataire*, a genuine epicurean, enjoying his pleasures with a quiet conscience, and praising God for them very devoutly. He has given a certain Alix, in whom he takes great interest, in marriage to Guillaume, a worthy shopkeeper. Florimond, a gentleman in the neighbourhood, had been for some time endeavouring to relieve Eugène of the charge of Alix. There is the making of a very telling comedy in these three characters; but Jodelle was not equal to the task. He puts their features on the canvas with no small amount of skill; but he can neither group them nor fill in the background. The play ends tamely with a sudden change of opinion on the part of Florimond; or, at least, we are to understand that Eugène buys him off by giving him his sister for a wife; and so everything finishes in the most satisfactory manner.

If there is poverty of invention in the conception of the play, there is a good deal more to be said for individual passages. Take, for instance, the following soliloquy of Guillaume, who is praising the amiability of his wife:—

“Ah, what pleasanter meeting  
Can there be in the world  
Than that which I have just had  
With this quite perfect woman,  
To whom God has bound me for life  
Ah God! how I desire  
To give thee thanks for ever!

Sur la richesse de la France  
O Dieu! quel trait de cruauté!  
Le ciel avait mis en Jodelle

Un esprit tout autre qu'humain;  
La France lui nia le pain,  
Tant elle fut mère cruelle.

And moreover, she is so sweet !  
 She never repels her friends ;  
 She is charitable to all ;  
 She is so amiable to me  
 That every one is astonished.  
 How often has she given me  
 Money to go and gamble !  
 He who will devote himself to God  
 Will never be in need ;  
 Alix always has money ;  
 She is holy here below ;  
 For it is by the grace of God  
 That this money comes to her so.

*Alix* (*aside, overhearing her husband*). I too am in bliss

To possess such a husband as I have.  
 Therefore I shall always be holy.

*Guill.* Even when I go to disport myself,  
 If I stay away three or four days,  
 She says nothing of it on my return,  
 Any more than of a single afternoon ;  
 And when I begin to make my excuse,  
 And to say to her something of this sort :  
 ‘ I beg you to pardon me, wife ;  
 Really it is a great shame ;  
 To have stayed away till now ’—  
 (She says) ‘ I would that you were still away,  
 My dear, it is good for your health.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Ah ! quelle plus douce rencontre  
 En toute la terre se montre  
 Que celle-là qu’ores j’ai faite  
 De cette femme toute parfaite,  
 A qui Dieu m’a joint pour ma vie.  
 Eh ! mon Dieu, que j’ai bonne envie  
 De t’en rendre grâce à jamais !  
 Outre cela, elle est tant douce !  
 Jamais ses amis ne repousse ;  
 Elle est à chacun charitable ;  
 Elle est envers moi tant aimable,  
 Que le monde en est étonné.  
 Quantes fois m’a-t-elle donné

De l’argent pour m’aller jouer !  
 Cil qui veut à Dieu se vouer  
 Ne sera jamais indigent ;  
 Alix a toujours de l’argent ;  
 Elle est sainte dès ce bas lieu ;  
 Car c’est de la grâce de Dieu  
 Que cet argent lui vient ainsi.

ALIX (*écoutant son mari, et à part*)  
 Je suis en paradis aussi ;  
 D’avoir un mari tel que j’ay.  
 Par ainsi sainte je serai.

GUILLAUME.  
 Même quand je me vais ébattre,

This, it must be admitted, is excellent comedy. No doubt the same thing will be done better hereafter, more subtly, and with greater show of probability. But it is not Jodelle's fault that Guillaume is such a blind and helpless dupe. The fine gradations of folly and self-deception, to which we are all of us more or less subject—often the more so the less we believe it—could not be painted with the same brush, or by the same hand, nor could they be appreciated by the same audiences. The audiences of Jodelle might have appreciated something considerably finer, if Jodelle could have given it to them; but we question if they were ready for the dry satire of Molière—still less for the acute innuendo of the present day. The public needs educating, step by step, and cannot be enlightened by a sudden flash. Jodelle was a genuine educator, and he prepared the soil for Corneille, Racine, and Molière himself.

Take another trait of this first dramatist of the Renaissance, the self-complacent apology of the abbé Eugène :—

“ In all this fair spacious circle of a world,  
 Hemmed in by the skies,  
 None so well preserves  
 This luck within himself as I . . .  
 Fortune bestows on me sufficient happiness  
 To delight me in this world . . .  
 Without labour, good things in abundance  
 Are brought within my house . . .  
 Kings are subject to anxiety  
 About the government of their lands ;  
 The nobles are subject to war . . .  
 The trader is the slave of danger  
 Incurred in foreign countries ;

Si j'y reste trois jours ou quatre,  
 Elle n'en dit rien au retour,  
 Non plus que d'un seul demi-jour.  
 Et quand je me veux excuser,  
 Et de tels mots vers elle user :

Pardon, je vous supply, ma femme,  
 Vraiment ce m'est un grand difflame  
 D'avoir demeuré jusqu'à ores ;  
 — Je voudrais qu'y fussiez encore,  
 Mon ami, c'est vostre santé.”



The-tiller of the ground painfully  
 Drives his oxen along the plain ;  
 The working-man ceaselessly troubled,  
 Can barely escape from poverty." . . .

But the superior clergy, like the abbé Eugène,

. . . "have no responsibility  
 Save to be well fed and dressed,  
 To be vicars, priors, canons,  
 Abbés, without having so many monks  
 As they have dogs and birds." <sup>1</sup>

Here the irony is doubtless finer ; more subtle than is the case with Villon's monks and canons, keener than the forcible satire of Rabelais ; almost as delicate in its way as anything produced by the succeeding century. What might not Jodelle have done if he had possessed the laborious patience recommended by du Bellay and practised by Ronsard!

Of Jodelle's friends and fellow-labourers there is not much

<sup>1</sup> "En tout ce beau rond spacieux  
 Qui est environné des cieux,  
 Nul ne garde si bien en soi  
 Ce bonheur comme moi en moi . . .  
 Fortune assez d'heur me rassemble  
 Pour me plaire en ce monde ici . . .  
 Sans travail, les biens à foison  
 Sont apportés en ma maison . . .  
 Les rois sont sujets à l'émoy  
 Pour le gouvernement des terres ;  
 Les nobles sont sujets aux guerres . . .  
 Le marchand est serf du danger  
 Qu'on traîne au pays étranger ;  
 Le laboureur avecque peine  
 Presse ses bœufs parmi la plaine ;  
 L'artisan, sans fin molesté,  
 A peine fait sa pauvreté . . .  
 . . . ne sont tenus  
 Qu'être bien nourris et vêtus,  
 Être curés, prieurs, chanoines,  
 Abbés sans avoir tant de moines,  
 Comme on a de chiens et oiseaux."

to be said. Jean de la Péruse,<sup>1</sup> author of a classical medley which he called *Médée*; Jacques de la Taille,<sup>2</sup> who wrote a *Daire*,<sup>3</sup> Charles Toutain, who attached his name to an *Agamemnon*; and Jean Antoine de Baïf, who translated Sophocles' *Antigone*, and Terence's *Eunuch*, and imitated Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, are nearly all forgotten. Jacques Grévin,<sup>4</sup> a Calvinistic doctor, who died young, was greatly praised by Ronsard at first, but his name was afterwards erased from the master's writings on account of his Protestant opinions. He wrote several comedies, and a tragedy *Jules César*, in which la Harpe found "grand and powerful ideas and the real tone of tragedy." Robert Garnier<sup>5</sup> was perhaps the only one who showed great inventive force, and in his tragedies, imitated from Seneca, Sophocles, and Euripides, he displayed at least the art of keeping up a dialogue, though he is not seldom prolix, harsh, and diffuse. A want of taste appears in all his creations, of which the best is *Bradamante*, a *tragi-comédie*, whereof the plot is borrowed from Ariosto. Listen to a dialogue between Aymon and Beatrix about a projected marriage of their daughter Bradamante.

*Aymon.* The proposed husband pleases me much.

*Beatrix.* And me too.

*Aymon.* I am quite delighted by him.

*Beatrix.* And so am I, upon my word.

*Aymon.* What I value most in so fine an alliance

Is that it will not be necessary to undo the purse-strings.

He asks for nothing.

*Beatrix.* He is too much of a nobleman.

What need has an emperor's son of our wealth?

<sup>1</sup> 1539-1555.

<sup>2</sup> 1542-1562.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Daire* is to be found this line: "Le seul ennuy mes ennuya désennuye."

<sup>4</sup> 1539-1579. Ronsard said of him—

"Ainsy dans nostre France un seul Gresvin assemble

La docte médecine et les beaux vers ensemble.

<sup>5</sup> 1545-1601.

*Aymon.* It is; however, a notable advantage for us  
 Not to give a halfpenny to her when she'll marry ;  
 Above all to-day, when there is no love,  
 And when court is only paid to riches ;  
 People only wish for money.

*Beatrix.* And what can you do against it ?  
 Must you get angry about that ?  
 It is the fashion to-day ;

*Aymon.* It is a cursed age.

*Beatrix.* But as the world goes, it is a golden age.  
 One has everything, one does everything, for this strange  
 metal ;  
 One is a good man, one deserves praise ;  
 One obtains dignities, offices, situations.  
 On the contrary, without it one is not valued.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Aymon.* Le parti me plaît fort.

*Beatrix.* Aussi fait-il à moy.

*Aymon.* J'en suis tout transporté.

*Beatrix.* Si suis-je par ma foy.

*Aymon.* Ce que je prise plus en si belle alliance,  
 C'est qu'il ne faudra point debourser de finance.  
 Il ne demande rien.

*Beatrix.* Il est trop grand seigneur.  
 Qu'a besoin de nos biens le fils d'un empereur ?

*Aymon.* Ce nous est toutefois un notable avantage  
 De ne bailler un sou pour elle en mariage,  
 Mesmement aujourd'hui qu'il n'y a point d'amour  
 Et qu'on ne fait sinon aux richesses la cour.  
 On ne veut que l'argent.

*Beatrix.* Et qu'y sçauriez-vous faire ?  
 Faut il que pour cela vous (vous) mettiez en colere ?  
 C'est le temps aujourd'hui.

*Aymon.* C'est un siècle maudit.

*Beatrix.* Mais c'est un siècle d'or, comme le monde vit.  
 On a tout, on fait tout pour ce metal estrange  
 On est homme de bien, on merite louange,  
 On a des dignitez, des charges, des estats ;  
 Au contraire, sans luy de nous on ne fait cas.

## § 3. THE CLASSICAL DRAMA.

On the whole, indeed, the classical drama revived by the *Pléiade* was virtually a failure; it never became widely popular, and scarcely found its way to an audience outside the circles of the Court, and the schools of fashion and of pedantry. But, in the meantime, the taste for the old national drama was not dead in France; and it manifested itself over and over again—no doubt more frequently than existing records might lead us to believe—in spite of the veto of the Parliament. Travelling through the provinces there were numerous companies of players, still clinging, in all probability, to the favourite *soties* and farces of earlier days; and few of these companies were without a poet who could re-handle old materials, and, at a pinch, produce something which might pass for new. In 1584 a company bolder than the rest, ambitious of a wider fame and a more lucrative run, came up to the capital. But, however they might have hoped to evade the terms of the edict of 1548, they were prevented from acting by the effete old corporation of the *Confrères de la Passion*, whose charter had never been annulled, although it was no longer of any value. Sixteen years later another company managed to come to an understanding with the *Confrères*, paying them a royalty for each representation. They installed themselves at the Hôtel d'Argent, near the Grève, and thenceforth Paris had a theatre which might fairly be called popular. In 1629, seven years after the birth of Molière, in the very year of the foundation of the Academy, Louis XIII. gave his authorisation to the *Comédiens ordinaires du Roi*, who established themselves in the Hôtel de Bourgogne. It was in this same year that Corneille produced his first play; the golden age of the French drama had begun.



Nearly eighty years between the début of Jodelle and that of Pierre Corneille,<sup>1</sup> and what intervened? The stage, as we have seen, was never without its occupants; either the Court drama or the provincial drama was being acted without cessation, and yet the spoils of literature are meagre and few. One name only, at most two names, deserve to be mentioned amongst the immediate predecessors of the author of the *Cid*: those of Hardy<sup>2</sup> and Mayret.<sup>3</sup> The first, whom a happy paradox has designated "a Shakespeare without the genius," whom Corneille honoured with unselfish praise, departed not a little from the senile classical fashion of the Pléiade, and has at least abundance of action and of characters. His muse is full of life and humour; his audiences were always large and well amused; but he is rather melodramatic than dramatic. Occasionally, as in *La Gigantomachie*, he descends to the most extravagant burlesque, ending in nothing short of a harlequinade. In *Ariadne* he gives us a pure tragedy for four protracted acts, and finishes the play with the marriage of Theseus and his victim. The best of his dramas, at all events in style and composition, is *Pantheé*, which is a tragedy to the last, original in its plot, and very fairly executed. As for Mayret, his *Sophonisbe* is a somewhat remarkable play, professedly shaped upon the model sketched out by Aristotle, and pressed upon the poet's acceptance by the pedantic Chapelain.<sup>4</sup> It duly observes the fourfold division into prologue, prothesis, epithesis, and catastrophe, as well as the unities of time and place. The subject is a fine one. Certain passages are undoubtedly readable, but as a whole the play deserves the name which Hardy applied to all his contemporaries: it is an abortion. The French drama was not yet, but the time was ripe for its appearance. And there were dramatic critics in those days, such as Chapelain

<sup>1</sup> 1606-1634.<sup>2</sup> 1560-1631.<sup>3</sup> 1604-1686.<sup>4</sup> 1595-1674.

and Scudéry,<sup>1</sup> who recognised in Corneille, the author of *Mélite*, the dramatist for whom France had been so patiently waiting.

No question is more pertinent with respect to any great dramatist than this: Did he create his audience, or did he find it waiting for him? Of course no man of transcendent genius, who writes what all men are constrained to listen to and applaud, can fail to modify his hearers; and in this sense Pierre Corneille, like Molière and Shakespeare, created an audience for himself. But, on the other hand, it is more true in the case of Corneille than of many other play-writers of consummate ability, that his public was at hand long before the master mind was in a condition to entertain and instruct it. The classical bent had been given to the French character and taste, even before Jodelle erected his stage, with such force and permanence that it was thenceforth impossible for a very long series of years that any literary production should make a deep impression upon the majority of educated Frenchmen unless it was cast in a distinctly classical mould; and this impossibility applied more stringently to the drama—to the polished poetic tragedy in particular—than to any other branch of literature. Tragedy must be purely classical, or it would be abortive. The greatest failures amongst the efforts of Corneille's predecessors were the tragedies—like the worst of Hardy's, for instance—which were least faithful to the lofty classical standard. No matter if the standard were too lofty for the generality of men; no matter if there were a thousand who could read and prate of Aristotle's laws, who could translate and criticise the masterpieces of Pindar, Æschylus, and Plautus, without fairly understanding their own words; the principles of classical taste were at least latent in their minds, and no man could extort their praise unless he could convince their sceptical judgments that the

<sup>1</sup> 1601-1667.

true spirit of Pindar, of Æschylus, and Plautus was in him. In addition to, rather in consequence of, this recurrence to classical ideas and models, the French mind had conceived an ardent attachment to order and uniformity in political ideas ; the nation, and especially the educated nation, had become intensely loyal, intensely averse to individual assertions of independence. Even in religion the Protestants were all but reduced to silence, whilst the novel Jansenist opinions were sternly repressed as fast as they manifested themselves. Realise the world of ideas in which a cultivated Frenchman lived and moved under Louis XIII. ; picture him, moreover, as a man of great and cherished leisure, elegant, fastidious, as much attached to the proprieties as to the pleasures of existence ; and you will form something like a correct idea of the audience before whom Corneille exhibited his best and most successful plays.

I have said that these were the characteristics of the more educated amongst the audiences of Corneille ; and the fact must not be overlooked that it was only the élite of Frenchmen who, early in the seventeenth century, had attained to this point of refinement. At the two extremes we find two classes of the general public to whom our words would scarcely apply, and upon whom the plays of Corneille and Racine were to produce their strongest and most valuable effect. Amongst the lower orders of society there were very many who had as yet had few opportunities of taking in through the eyes and ears what their more fortunate compatriots had acquired through the study of ancient literature, and by the exchange of intellectual ideas and criticism. And amongst the higher orders, it was still true of a considerable proportion that "the authority of the king was often despised ; the parliaments ever ready for revolt ; the great lords undisciplined, violent, quarrelsome, braving the edicts concerning duels, involving in their hazardous revolts the fair ladies

whom they loved.”<sup>1</sup> In some sense, it is true, the age which saw Corneille’s *début* was an age of licence: true, that is, of the classes upon whom education and the neo-classical refinement had not yet exerted its influence. It was for Corneille, in a large degree, to bridge over the gulf; to amalgamate, as it were, the heterogeneous audience over whom his polished dramas cast their spell. Of such a kind is the privilege to which the great literary creator in every age is born. Himself the product of the better half of his generation, he steps across the dividing line, and raises the other half to his own level.

#### § 4. CORNEILLE.

Pierre Corneille,<sup>2</sup> who is deservedly reckoned with Molière as the creator of French dramatic art, was born at Rouen in the seventh year of the seventeenth century; and he devoted himself at an early age wholly to the drama. It is true that he has left a few miscellaneous poems, and a translation in verse of the *Office of the Holy Virgin*; and for six years, from 1653, he renounced the stage, and produced a fine translation in verse of Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitatio Christi*. His religious tendency was manifested throughout his life; but the best efforts of his literary genius were occupied in the composition of lofty tragedies in a style of great beauty and finish, interspersed now and then by comedies of considerable grace and vigour. His life, of which but little is known, was in harmony with the grandeur and severity of his muse. He lived apart, almost as an ascetic; it would even seem that he was reserved and sensitive, if not morose by disposition. It is related of him that his first comedy, *Médée*, was written under the inspiration of his first love, one Mademoiselle Milet, re-

<sup>1</sup> Paul Albert, *La Poésie*.

<sup>2</sup> 1656-1684.



sident in Rouen. Fontenelle, Corneille's nephew, contributes an anecdote apparently relating to the same lady: "Hardy was growing old, and his death would soon cause a wide breach in the theatre, when a slight occurrence, which happened in the house of a citizen in a provincial town, gave him an illustrious successor. A young man took one of his friends to see a lady with whom he was in love; the new comer established himself on the ruins of his introducer. The pleasure which this adventure gave him made him a poet; he wrote a comedy on it: and there we have the great Corneille." Some part of the story may be true; and it seems to be confirmed by certain verses of Corneille's, which are possibly the foundation of the anecdote.<sup>1</sup> But something more even than a first pure love was behind, to produce the author of the *Cid* and of *Cinna*.

*Mélite* corresponds to the story which is told of its origin. Eraste is the lover who suffers from his over-confidence: Tircis is he who, after rallying his friend on his long devotion to one who will not respond to his vows, meets the proud beauty only to become himself the slave of her charms, and, in spite of himself, to supplant Eraste. Hear the latter pleading his cause:—

*Mélite*.—I neither accept love nor give it to any. How should I give what I never had?

*Eraste*.—It is too easy for you; and henceforth, thanks to you, nature displays her injustice to me by changing her course in order to increase my pain.

*Mélite*.—An imaginary pain, and one which seems only to be felt through mockery.

*Eraste*.—A pain which tears my soul and heart.

<sup>1</sup> From his *Excuse à Ariste*:

"J'adorai donc Phylis, et la secrète estime  
Que ce divin esprit faisoit de notre rime  
Me fit devenir poète aussitôt qu' amoureux."

*Mélite.*—One rarely bears with so calm a countenance a soul and heart in such sorry plight.

*Eraste.*—Your lovely face allays my grief until my countenance borrows its colour from your own.

*Mélite.*—Do better ; to end your ill and your passion, borrow at the same time the coldness of my soul.<sup>1</sup>

Eraste presently rebels, reproaches the cruel fair one, and plots revenge. Tircis has a sister, Cloris, betrothed to Philandre ; and Eraste writes a love-letter to the latter, in the name of Mélite. Philandre responds, and the four lovers are at cross purposes. Tircis meditates the death of Mélite ; Mélite is informed of his design, and swoons away. Eraste hears a distorted account of the effects of his treachery ; he thinks he has killed both Mélite and Tircis, and he heroically resolves to rescue them from the clutches of Pluto. He goes mad, in fact ; takes the first man he meets for Charon, and jumps upon his back. Rudely repulsed by this one, he meets another, whom he takes for Minos ; and to him he confesses his crime. But Minos is no other than Philandre ; and thus the whole skein is unravelled. Eraste is pardoned ; recovers his reason, and fares better than he deserves ; for Philandre is rejected by Cloris in favour of the man whom her brother had supplanted with Mélite. We have here, it will be seen, farce as well as comedy ; but the comedy is of the right kind.

<sup>1</sup> *M.*—Je ne reçois d'amour et n'en donne à personne.

Les moyens de donner ce que je n'eus jamais ?

*E.*—Ils vous sont trop aisés ; et par vous désormais

La nature pour moi montre son injustice

A pervertir son cours pour croître mon supplice.

*M.*—Supplice imaginaire, et qui sent son moqueur.

*E.*—Supplice qui déchire et mon âme et mon cœur.

*M.*—Il est rare qu'on porte avec si beau visage

L'âme et le cœur ensemble en si triste équipage.

*E.*—Votre charmant aspect suspendant mes douleurs,

Mon visage du vôtre emprunte les couleurs.

*M.*—Faites mieux ; pour finir vos maux et votre flamme,

Empruntez tout d'un temps les froideurs de mon âme.

Indeed, if Corneille had never written a tragedy, he would still have taken high rank as a dramatist.

*Mélite* was succeeded three years later by *Clitandre*, or *Innocence delivered*, in which the heroine Dorise snatches a hair-pin from her locks and pokes out, with it, the eye of Pymante, who addressed a long monologue to the murderous instrument.<sup>1</sup> This *tragi-comédie* was followed in rapid succession by the *Widow*, which was very successful; by the *Gallery of the Palais*; *The Ladies-Maid*; *The Place Royale*; *Medea*, a tragedy chiefly imitated from Seneca; the *Comic Illusion*, in which appeared for the first time the *Matamore*, an adaptation of the classical "Miles Gloriosus," and somewhat like Ben Jonson's Captain Bobadil; and finally, in 1636, the *Cid*. The first eight plays were merely tentatives; the *Cid* was a masterpiece; and it was at once hailed with delight by all except a few of the most punctilious critics. It was the complaint of the latter, of Scudéry and Chapelain amongst them, that the play was little better than a melodrama, and that it appeared deliberately to prostitute the noblest talent to a violation of the principal canons of classical art. From their classical point of view the critics were right. Corneille, living in an essentially classical age, admitted the justice of the rebuke; and, after four years' silence and study, he produced *Horace* and *Cinna*, in the severest classical form. Nevertheless, if the *Cid* had not been written, Corneille would not have been Corneille; and, in particular, he would not have secured his hold upon that more numerous and more difficult audience which it was his lot to train and mould.

The *Cid* was precisely the kind of subject to arrest and fascinate the wilder spirit of the age. The young Spanish hero, the Castilian of twenty, who saved his country from the Moors by prodigies of valour and heroism; who did this without the king's aid, and yet as a perfect knight, *sans peur et*

<sup>1</sup> Hence the expression "discourir sur la pointe d'une aiguille."

*sans reproche*, charmed the minds of the restless nobles and of the impressionable citizens who crowded to listen to it ; and neither the cold criticism nor the disparaging commentaries of more refined and affected hearers could damp the ardour of enthusiasm with which the play was greeted. Was it best for the fame of Corneille that he should desert a rôle in which he had proved himself so well calculated to succeed ? Did he, by listening to the critics, and forcing himself more strictly into the classical groove, just miss the chance of becoming the genuine tragic genius whom France has never yet seen, because she cannot divorce tragedy from the conception of a classical model ?

Corneille was indebted for the plot of the *Cid* to the work of a Spanish writer. *The youth of the Cid*, by Guillen de Castro.<sup>1</sup> From him he borrows the preparations of Rodrigo for his contest against the Moors, the insult and blow given by Count Gomez to Don Diego, in presence of King Ferdinand, the duel and terrible reparation of the insulted man, who returns with his cheek bathed in the blood of his insulter. But the finest portion of the play owes its strength to the episode of Rodrigo's love for Chimène, and to their noble struggle between duty and passion. This is in fact the centre of interest to a French, and perhaps to an English reader. Judge from a brief example whether the charm is a powerful one or not. The lovers just attain the zenith of their bliss, when duty bids them part.

*Rodr.* O miracle of love !

*Chim.* O height of misery !

*Rodr.* What grief and tears will our fathers cost us !

*Chim.* Rodrigo, who could have believed it ?

*Rodr.* Chimène, who would have said it ?

*Chim.* That our joy was so nigh, and so soon lost !

*Rodr.* And that thus close to port, unlikely as it seemed,  
A sudden storm should shipwreck all our hopes !

<sup>1</sup> 1567-1631.



*Chim.* Ah ! fatal griefs !

*Rodr.* Ah ! profitless regrets !<sup>1</sup>

Estimate the dramatist in another style. The most measured and balanced passage in the *Cid* is, perhaps, the long account which Rodrigo gives of the successful ambuscade whereby the Moors had fallen into his hands :—

“ That obscure light which is shed by the stars  
 Showed us some thirty sail advancing with the tide ;  
 Borne on the swelling flood, as by a common force,  
 The Moors and the ocean are carried into port.  
 We let them pass ; all seems to them at rest,  
 No soldiers in the port, none on the city-walls.  
 This silence so profound deceives their minds,  
 They dare no longer doubt that they’ve surprised us ;  
 Fearless they land, cast anchor, disembark,  
 And run to fall into expectant hands.  
 Then up we rose, and all, with one accord,  
 Made heaven resound with our exulting cries . . .  
 They ran to pillage, but they met with war ;  
 At sea, on land, we bore them down before us . . .  
 How many valiant deeds, how many brave exploits  
 Were hidden by the horror of that darkness,  
 Where each, sole witness of his valour’s deeds,  
 Could not perceive whom fortune favoured ! . . .  
 I could not know it till the break of day,  
 But light, at last, showed us our victory ;  
 The Moors behold their loss, and suddenly lose heart,

<sup>1</sup> The original is not so bald

*Rodr.* O miracle d’amour !

*Chim.* O comble de misères !

*Rodr.* Que de maux et de pleurs nous coûteront nos pères !

*Chim.* Rodrigue, qui l’eût cru ?

*Rodr.* Chimène, qui l’eût dit ?

*Chim.* Que notre heur fût si proche, et sitôt se perdit !

*Rodr.* Et que si près du port, contre toute apparence,

Un orage si prompt brisât notre espérance ?

*Chim.* Ah ! mortelles douleurs !

*Rodr.* Ah ! regrets superflus !

And when they see fresh levies come to aid us,  
 Their thirst for conquest yields to fear of death. . . .  
 In the meanwhile, their kings at bay amongst us,  
 And some few of their men, pierced by our swords,  
 Maintain a valiant fight, and dearly sell their lives. . . .  
 Till, seeing their soldiers all fall at their feet,  
 And that it was hopeless to defend themselves,  
 They asked who leader was ; I gave my name ; they yield.<sup>1</sup>

The grandeur of such a passage needs no enhancement by any words of ours. No wonder the play was received with rapture, and that "fine as the *Cid*" passed forthwith amongst the proverbs of literature. Yet, as we have indicated, the opposition manifested against it by the pundits of Parisian

<sup>1</sup> " Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles  
 Enfin avec le flux nous fit voir trente voiles ;  
 L'onde s'enfle dessous, et, d'un commun effort,  
 Les Maures et la mer montent jusques au port.  
 On les laisse passer ; tout leur paraît tranquille ;  
 Point de soldats au port, point aux murs de la ville.  
 Notre profond silence abusant leurs esprits  
 Ils n'osent plus douter de nous avoir surpris ;  
 Ils abordent sans peur, ils ancrent, ils descendent,  
 Et courent se livrer aux mains qui les attendent,  
 Nous nous levons alors, et, tous en même temps  
 Poussons jusques au ciel mille cris éclatants. . . .  
 Ils couraient au pillage, et rencontrent la guerre ;  
 Nous les pressons sur l'eau, nous les pressons sur terre. . . .  
 Oh ! combien d'actions, combien d'exploits célèbres  
 Furent ensevelis dans l'horreur des ténèbres,  
 Où chacun, seul témoin des grands coups qu'il donnait,  
 Ne pouvait discerner où le sort inclinait . . .  
 Et ne l'ai pu savoir jusques au point du jour.  
 Mais enfin sa clarté montre notre avantage ;  
 Le Maure voit sa perte, et soudain perd courage ;  
 Et voyant un renfort qui nous vient secourir,  
 L'ardeur de vaincre cède à la peur de mourir. . . .  
 Cependant que leurs rois, engagés parmi nous,  
 Et quelque peu des leurs, tout percés de nos coups,  
 Disputent vaillamment, et vendent bien leur vie. . . .  
 Mais, voyant à leurs pieds tomber tous leurs soldats,  
 Et que seuls désormais en vain ils se défendent,  
 Ils demandent le chef ; je me nomme : ils se rendent."

taste and fashion was very strong. Cardinal Richelieu, then at the height of his influence, and having just founded the French Academy, urged this youthful institution to bring its weighty criticism to bear against the audacious and ill-regulated vigour of the successful drama. The opinion of the Academy was drawn up by Chapelain; and it is undoubtedly a weighty sentence. "A piece is only good," says this remarkable document, "when it gives a reasonable contentment—that is, when it satisfies the learned as well as the people. We ought to inquire, not whether the *Cid* has pleased, but whether it ought to have pleased." Whereupon Boileau writes finely:—

"In vain a minister takes part against the *Cid*,  
 All Paris looks upon Chimène as Rodrigo does;  
 In vain the Academy censures it as a body;  
 The public refuses to obey, and obstinately admires it."<sup>1</sup>

In 1639 Corneille produced his tragedy of *Horatius*—the original title, and not *The Horatii*—to prove that he had no need to imitate any one, and, with a vengeance worthy of a great poet, he dedicated this tragedy to Cardinal Richelieu. Though there are faults in it, it is on the whole a masterpiece, and contains some very grand lines. The contrast between Sabine and Camille is well kept up. The picture of old Horatius is really that of a Roman of ancient times, and can only have been conceived by a man who wrote what he felt.

*Cinna*, which appeared a few months after *Horace*, cast in a far severer mould than the *Cid*, is perhaps the best example which we could select of Corneille's classical dramas. The author himself thought it his finest. "As the verses of my

<sup>1</sup> "En vain contre le *Cid* un ministre se ligue  
 Tout Paris pour Chimène a les yeux de Rodrigue;  
 L'Académie en corps a beau le censurer,  
 Le public, révolté, s'obstine à l'admirer."—*Satire IX*.

tragedy of *Horace*," he says,<sup>1</sup> "have something more appropriate and less strained for the expression of thought than those of the *Cid*, so it may be said that the verses of this play are more finished than those of *Horace*, and also that the simplicity of conception in the plot, which is neither overcharged with incidents, nor too much complicated by details of what has passed before the commencement of the piece, is doubtless one cause of the great approbation that it has met with." The criticism is just; and a brief analysis will tend partly to confirm it.

Cæsar Augustus, Emperor of Rome, is represented by Corneille as characteristically generous, liberal towards his friends and clement towards his foes. To Cinna, the grandson of Pompey, he had been especially liberal; nor was he otherwise to Æmilia, the daughter of his old tutor Caius Toranius. During the Triumvirate, however, Augustus had proscribed Toranius; and Æmilia, who attributed the death of her father to the Emperor, nurses a deep feeling of revenge against the latter. This is the focus of the tragic interest; for Cinna is in love with Æmilia, and is instigated by her to enter into a conspiracy against the life of Augustus. The passages which describe the conflict between Æmilia's love for Cinna and the hatred towards Augustus which causes her to urge him forward in the plot are very fine; and the poet has known how to exhibit this conflict in a striking manner. The first soliloquy of the heroine artistically presents us with the key-note of the whole play:—

"Ye impatient longings for a signal revenge,  
Whose origin is due to my father's death,  
Headstrong children of my resentment,  
Whom my misguided grief blindly embraces,  
Ye assume too powerful a sway over my soul;  
Suffer me to breathe for a few moments,

<sup>1</sup> *Estimée de Cinna*.



And to consider, in the condition in which I am,  
 Both what I venture and what I aim at.  
 When I behold Augustus in the midst of his glory,  
 And when you reproach my sad memory  
 That my father, massacred by his own hand,  
 Was the first step to the throne whereon I see him—  
 When you offer me this bloody picture,  
 The reason of my hatred and the result of his fury,  
 I abandon myself entirely to your burning transports,  
 And believe that, for one death, I owe him a thousand.  
 And yet, amidst a rage so reasonable,  
 I love Cinna still more than I hate Augustus,  
 And I feel this seething agitation grow cool  
 When, to keep pace with it, I must expose my lover.”<sup>1</sup>

Æmilia's misgivings are increased by her confidant Fulvia, who entreats her to pause before she commits herself and her lover to so dangerous an enterprise. “Why,” asks Fulvia, “why need you incur the semblance of ingratitude?”—in answer to Æmilia's plea that her duty to her father's memory absolved her from the claims which Augustus might have

<sup>1</sup> “*Impatients désirs d'une illustre vengeance,  
 Dont la mort de mon père a formé la naissance,  
 Enfants impétueux de mon ressentiment,  
 Que ma douleur séduite embrasse aveuglément,  
 Vous prenez sur mon âme un trop puissant empire ;  
 Durant quelques moments souffrez que je respire,  
 Et que je considère, en l'état où je suis,  
 Et ce que je hasarde et ce que je poursuis.  
 Quand je regarde Auguste au milieu de sa gloire,  
 Et que vous reprochez à ma triste mémoire.  
 Que par sa propre main mon père massacré  
 Du trône où je le vois fait le premier degré ;  
 Quand vous me présentez cette sanglante image  
 La cause de ma haine, et l'effet de sa rage,  
 Je m'abandonne toute à vos ardents transports,  
 Et crois, pour une mort, lui devoir mille morts,  
 Au milieu, toutefois, d'une fureur si juste,  
 J'aime encor plus Cinna que je ne hais Auguste,  
 Et je sens refroidir ce bouillant mouvement  
 Quand il faut, pour le suivre, exposer mon amant.*”

established over her by his marked and constant favours. "Can you not hate without your hate breaking bounds? Plenty of others, beside yourself, have not forgotten by what cruelties his throne was strengthened." "What!" cries Æmilia, "shall I hate him without seeking to injure him?" It is not in her nature. She, a weak woman, the favourite of the Emperor, even to the eclipse of Livia, will dare and do though all Rome hold back; if not with her own hand, then by the hand of the man whom love has made her slave. Cinna comes in as the two are talking, eager and sanguine, without any of the hesitation felt by his mistress. "As for me," he exclaims, "let Heaven be stern or propitious to me, raise me to glory, or deliver me over to punishment, let Rome declare for us or against us, if I die to serve thee, all will be pleasant to me." This conversation is interrupted by Evander, the freedman of Cinna, who informs his master that Cæsar has summoned him, and at the same time Maximus, another of the chiefs of the conspiracy. Æmilia exclaims:

"To send for the chiefs of the enterprise!

Both! at the same time! You are discovered!

*Cinna.* Let us hope better, for Heaven's sake.

*Æmilia.* Ah, Cinna! I lose thee."<sup>1</sup>

But Augustus has sent for his friends only to tell them that the power and glory which he had so greatly coveted begin to pall upon him. He invites their sympathy and assistance, insists upon their exercising a greater authority in the State, and is set at rest by their flattery. Maximus, left alone with Cinna, is on the point of relenting; but the firm resolution of Æmilia acts through the spirit of her lover, and

<sup>1</sup> *Emilie.* Mander les chefs de l'entreprise!

Tous deux! en même temps! Vous êtes découverts!

*Cinna.* Espérons mieux, de grâce.

*Emilie.* Ah, Cinna! je te perds!

*Act I. Scene 4.*

Cinna is more determined than ever to carry out the plot. A certain instinctive jealousy between these two men is skillfully insinuated during this scene ; and the third act reveals to us that Maximus also is in love with Æmilia. His freedman Euphorbus, discovering the fact, comes straight to the point with him. "How does my friendship," sighs Maximus, plunge me in extreme wretchedness !" "The remedy," rejoins Euphorbus, "is simple ; act for your own interest. Break the fatal bond of a scheme which is ruining you : gain a mistress by accusing a rival." Maximus is indignant ; then he listens and considers the advice. Meanwhile Cinna's heart begins to fail ; he is plunged in melancholy at the thought of betraying a sovereign who has offered him the half of his kingdom ; and it is now the turn of Maximus adroitly to confirm his resolution. Æmilia, also, perceiving his weakness, taunts and stings him into renewing his promise, and having done so herself for a moment yields—but only for a moment. Euphorbus betrays the conspiracy to the Emperor, who is overwhelmed by the treachery of his friends.

"After I had placed my empire in their hands,  
They plot together to rob me of my life !  
Maximus has seen his error ; he has caused me to be  
warned,  
And displays a heart touched by genuine repentance  
But Cinna !

*Euphorbus.* Cinna alone persists in his fury,  
And rebels all the more against your goodness."

The cunning freedman goes on to tell Augustus that his

<sup>1</sup> *Aug.* "Après qu'entre leurs mains j'ai remis mon empire,  
Pour m'arracher le jour l'un et l'autre conspire !  
Maxime a vu sa faute, il m'en fait avertir,  
Et montre un coeur touché d'un juste repentir ;  
Mais Cinna !

*Euphorbe.* Cinna seul dans sa rage s'obstine,  
Et contre vos bontés d'autant plus se mutine."

*Act IV. Scene 1*

master has thrown himself into the Tiber. The Emperor sends for Cinna ; and after a grand soliloquy, in which he bitterly resolves to die, but first to "extinguish the torch of life in the blood of the ungrateful one," Augustus has an interview with his mild-minded consort, Livia, who persuades him to pardon the traitors.<sup>1</sup> Maximus, suddenly presenting himself to Æmilia, after the report of his death had reached her, declares his passion ; but he is received with disdain, and even accused of treachery to Cinna, until he too resolves upon death.

In the last act Augustus calmly reproaches Cinna, in a monologue, perhaps, the finest in French tragedy ; the latter braves his sovereign, and demands to be condemned. Whilst they are speaking Livia enters with Æmilia and Fulvia ; and here is a genuine touch of female jealousy. She exclaims—

" You know not yet all his accomplices :

Your Æmilia is one of them, my lord ; behold her ! " <sup>2</sup>

Æmilia takes the blame upon herself ; and Augustus cries—

" O daughter ! is this the reward of my favours ?

*Æm.* My father's produced the like effect in you.

*Aug.* Think with what affection I nourished your youth.

*Æm.* He nourished yours with the same tenderness ;

He was your tutor, and you were his assassin ;

You have shown me the path to crime. " <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Corneille has only sketched Livia in outline. She does not appear until the end of the fourth act, and her part was commonly omitted on the stage—at all events in the later representations of the play.

<sup>2</sup> " Vous ne connaissez pas encor tous les complices ;  
Votre Emilie en est, seigneur, et la voici."

<sup>3</sup> "*Aug.* O ma fille ! est-ce là le prix de mes bienfaits ?

*Em.* Ceux de mon père en vous firent mêmes effets.

*Aug.* Songe avec quel amour j'élevai ta jeunesse

*Em.* Il éleva la vôtre avec même tendresse ;

Il fut votre tuteur, et vous son assassin ;

Et vous m'avez au crime enseigné le chemin."

*Act V. Scene 2.*



Livia thereupon preaches the doctrine of the inviolability of the life of monarchs, no matter how they have obtained the throne, and no matter what they do or have done. Then Maximus enters, and confesses the part which he has played; the Emperor is again overwhelmed; but the triple blow to his confidence has the effect of softening his heart; and he forgives the conspirators.

Such is *Cinna*; with the *minimum* of action and variety, but with infinite simplicity, strength of delineation, gravity, and eloquence. It is the most strictly classical, and at the same time the most poetical of Corneille's plays; it does not conceal the difficulty which he felt in restricting his Muse to the classical groove, but it displays the power of his genius in overcoming the difficulty. Dryden calls it "the very best of Corneille's," and says: "Had it been possible for Aristotle to have seen the *Cinna*, I am confident he would have altered his opinion, and concluded that a simple change of will might be managed with so much judgment, as to render it the most agreeable, as well as the most surprising part of the whole fable."<sup>1</sup>

*Polyeucte*, represented in 1640, is a Christian tragedy, full of pathetic tenderness and sublime thoughts. The heroine sacrificing even her love to her belief, and Severus, the heroic soldier and the generous rival, will interest the student at all times, though we must admit that as an acting piece it seems rather monotonous. In the two following years he produced *Pompey*, and *The Liar*, a comedy, freely followed from the Spanish. In the first-mentioned tragedy the style is often turgid, though the character of Cornelia is depicted in a masterly manner; the comedy is natural in tone, conversa-

<sup>1</sup> In the epistle dedicatory to *Love Triumphant*, Dryden's last play. He also alludes to Augustus, in *Cinna*, changing his intention of punishing the conspiracy, and endeavours to excuse by it the plot of his own play, where Veramond, king of Arragon, suddenly changes his temper and resolution, and pardons Alphonso, who has given himself voluntarily up to him.

tional, and contains some fine character-sketches ; above all, those of the hero Dorante and his father G ron te. A *Sequ l to the Liar*, also imitated from the Spanish, which was brought out a year later, met with little success, and deservedly so ; but Corneille took his revenge with *Rodogune*, of which the fifth act struck terror in the heart of the spectators. Then came *Th odore* (1645), another Christian tragedy, in which a young girl has to choose between being dishonoured or becoming an apostate, and which was wholly unsuccessful. Two years later he gave *H raclius*, and was at last elected a member of the Academy, after having seen twice some insignificant literary man preferred to him. *Don Sancho of Arragon*, a heroic comedy ; *Andromeda*, a grand piece with machinery, which was acted forty-five times, a very wonderful success for these days, and *Nicom des*, followed in succession, but did not add to the fame of their author. *Pertharite*, acted in 1653, was a complete failure, and in his preface to that tragedy Corneille declared openly that he abandoned the stage, and that "he perceived he had become too old"—he was forty-seven years of age—"to be still the fashion." But, listening to the advice of Fouquet, he produced again, six years afterwards, * dipus*, a wretched tragedy, though it met with some success ; and then, following one another, the *Golden Fleece* ; *Sertorius*, in which the hero is well delineated ; *Sophonisba* ; *Otho*, in which Galba and Otho are energetically depicted after Tacitus ; *Agessilaus* ; *Attila* ; *Titus and Berenice*, a subject which Racine also treated ; *Psyche*, a comedy-ballet, in collaboration with Moli re and Quinault ; *Pulcheria* ; and finally, after a dramatic career of forty-five years, and after having produced thirty-two plays, his last tragedy, *Surena* (1675). Let us give the final lines of this play. Surena has been murdered, and his sister Palmis addresses the following words to Eurydice, a Parthian princess, who has been loved by her brother :—

“ And you, Madam, whose useless love,  
 And intrepid pride appears yet tranquil,  
 You who, full of affection for him, without determining  
     anything,  
 Have only loved him to assassinate him,  
 Go, and look at the ending of such a love,  
 Go and gather the fruit of it, and enjoy its advantages.  
 What! You are the cause of his loss, and you do not weep.  
*Eurydice (stabs herself).* No, I do not weep, madam ; but  
     I die.”<sup>1</sup>

With this sublime saying this great poet closes his poetic struggle, and leaves his fame to the judgment of posterity.

In order to arrive at a just idea of the theatre of Corneille one ought to read also his *Prefaces*, and his three discourses *On the Utility and the Facts of Dramatic Poetry*, *On Tragedy*, and *On the Three Unities*, in which the depth of his studies, as well as his theories, are fully developed.

It is melancholy to have to state that the last days of Corneille were saddened by domestic troubles, by penury nobly borne, and above all by a painful consciousness of the decline of his genius, the greatest burden which God can lay upon the already overtaken brain of an aged literary man, of whom the eminent ones appear doomed in all countries to be more or less admired by posterity, and more or less attacked by contemporaries ; whose common lot it seems to be to have monuments erected after their death with the very stones which they received when they asked for bread.

<sup>1</sup> *Palmis.* “ Et vous, madame, et vous, dont l’amour inutile,  
 Dont l’intrépide orgueil paraît encor tranquille,  
 Vous qui, brûlant pour lui, sans vous déterminer,  
 Ne l’avez tant aimé que pour l’assassiner,  
 Allez d’un tel amour, allez voir tout l’ouvrage,  
 En recueillir le fruit, en goûter l’avantage.  
 Quoi ! vous causez sa perte et n’avez point de pleurs ?

*Eurydice.* Non, je ne pleure point, madame ; mais je meurs.

Nearly all students of literature, of every nation, have agreed in extolling Corneille as the greatest classical poet of France, and it may seem superfluous in me to add even the smallest tribute to the perennial eulogies bestowed upon him. But when a nation erects a statue in honour of one of its great intellects, no contribution, however small, is disdained. Every worker in the fields of *belles-lettres* has thus a right to bestow his obolus of honest admiration upon the poet who has sung of noble deeds in noble language.

When we have read one of the best tragedies of Corneille—and I admit at once that they are very unequal—we rise from its perusal better than we were before, with an intense reverence for these more than human heroes or heroines whose adventures we have followed. They are superhumanly brave, generous, lofty in words and action, and the atmosphere they move in becomes purer and better, because they dwell there. They have no mortal weaknesses, or if they show them it is on a much grander scale than ordinary human beings; their virtues are enhanced by the vices and follies of the tyrants, the wicked and sometimes ridiculous personages who serve as their foil. All the characters, indeed, are so completely concrete in their actions, so monotonously virtuous or vicious, so argumentative, that they seem not to possess many passions, but only one; and whether as fathers or lovers, friends or enemies, tyrants or champions, we admire them, respect them, but admit that they sometimes weary us. And this is not to be wondered at; for we are accustomed to meet in the circle in which we move complex men and women, gifted with many virtues, having not a few vices, and animated by various passions, of which one may now and then predominate, but which generally work harmoniously together, and do not obtrude themselves offensively. Shakspeare is perhaps the best delineator of humanity, considered from this point of view. But Corneille's characters



are ever grandiloquent, move always on stilts, are often too refined, and not seldom over-emphatic in the expression of their love or hatred. Hence we feel constrained when in their company ; they are wanting in something ; they are too completely good, bad, or heroic, they are quite different from us ; they are perhaps too much above us. What are our petty moving springs, our huckstering ambition, in comparison with their motives ? Their principles are not ours, their very language differs, their noble actions tacitly reprove our daily mode of living. It is all very well to sneer at such tragedies, to say that it would be very uncomfortable to live with such eminently virtuous and dignified men ; but granted all this, and yet the fact remains that we feel all the better and more moral after the perusal of Corneille. We rise with a momentary desire to imitate, if possible, such pure ideals. We go on with our everyday life, mayhap not much the better, yet certainly not much the worse, after reading one of Corneille's tragedies ; thanking God in our innermost heart, if we have any manliness left in us, that there were men in this world who created such genuine and high-minded characters, which have no prototypes in real life, but are grand exemplars for many ages, to be respectfully admired as long as there exist people wise enough to reverence imaginative and unapproachable creations. Men, as a general rule, love variety and emotion ; but if it be the highest aim of poetry to ennoble and strengthen the mind, and not to deprave or torture it, then Corneille is one of the few grand poets with which this world has been blessed.

Thomas Corneille,<sup>1</sup> his brother, who was nineteen years younger than Pierre, was also a laborious dramatist, but is a proof that the old Latin saying, *Labor vincit omnia*, is not always true, for though he laboured hard, he could not overcome his want of talent. He married the sister of his bro-

<sup>1</sup> 1625-1709

ther's wife, lived with his brother, and wrote the same number of dramatic pieces ; yet only his *Count of Essex*, and perhaps the *Festin de Pierre*—which he versified after Molière's *Don Juan*—are known to posterity. He was an excellent brother, but not at all a first-rate dramatist.

## CHAPTER V.

## § 1. A SATIRIST OF THE LATER RENAISSANCE.

IN an age endowed with literary activity, when creations abound and ideas overflow the narrow limits of human existence, it must always happen that certain individuals who have lived all their lives in the midst of the great current of intellectual history, dying at last in a ripe old age, appear to have belonged especially to more than one generation, and to lay claim to a share in more than one distant epoch. Such a man was Etienne Pasquier,<sup>1</sup> whose lifetime corresponded at one point or another with the prime of such historians as Calvin, de Beza, Agrippa d'Aubigné, de l'Hôpital, Montluc, de Lanoue, and Brantôme. We have made acquaintance also with many of the historians and pamphleteers who entered most deeply into the religious controversies of the sixteenth century, contributing to the history or giving expression to the bitterness of the League and its opponents. Let us now direct our attention to a prominent figure in the literary annals of the later Renaissance—to a man who has been, if not neglected, still appreciated only in a partial and incomplete manner, but who is nevertheless a many-sided and far-reaching literary creator, well worthy of being crowned with a higher and more enduring recognition. A poet, an historian, a writer of letters, a satirist of much power and incisive-

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. book iii. ch. 3, page 315.

ness, Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné<sup>1</sup> is indispensable to a due understanding of the historical and literary epoch with the spirit whereof his works are so thoroughly imbued. His father, when he was only eleven years old, showed him the remains of some slaughtered Protestants at Amboise, and told him "to act as he had done, and not to be sparing of his life in order to avenge these chiefs so full of honour ;" and that if he did not act so a parent's curse should cling to him. A zealous Protestant, a counsellor of state, a soldier ; remarkable for high moral and personal courage, for prudence and directness of speech, for consistency and incorruptibility—at all events political incorruptibility—amidst a court so noted for corruption and double dealing as was that of the later Valois, he retained to the end of his life the respect both of friends and of foes—of the former, because they knew him at his best ; of the latter, no doubt because they knew him at his worst, as one of the hardest hitters in the warfare of satire, who rarely spared an enemy, and who never struck without wounding. To Henry IV., during the earlier years of his reign, he gave such assistance as the king had received from no other literary ally save the writers of the *Satire Ménippée*. Of the religious wars themselves he wrote as he fought, sternly, with a high sense of duty and a bitter partisanship, as eager and twice as trenchant as that of Montluc and de Lanoue. When the wars were over and the Protestant king was firmly seated on the throne, he could not relax, like most of his contemporaries, but kept his bow ever bent, and his arrow ever drawn to the head. Even before the monarch himself, whom he loved and served, just as he had despised and satirised his predecessors, he would not play the courtier, nor sacrifice his truth and self-respect to his

<sup>1</sup> 1550-1630. He was the grandfather of Madame de Maintenon ; the progenitor of a distinguished family, whereof Merle D'Aulagnac, in the present century, was a worthy representative.



desire to please. Austere, almost morose, to his king as to the weakest of his friends, he steadily refused to flatter and cringe amidst the crowd of sycophants whom the rising fortunes of the conqueror of Ivry had attracted to his side. The faithful counsellor clung to his master even after his apostasy; perhaps recognising the almost irresistible force of the constraint which made Henry abjure the reformed religion, but at the same time scorning with infinite bitterness the unscrupulous servility of the Protestants who changed their religion like their court dress. Henry himself did not escape the lash of his subject's tongue. When Châtel made his unsuccessful attempt on the king's life, d'Aubigné said to the latter: "God has smitten you on the lip for having denied him with the lip; he will smite you to the heart when you have denied him with the heart." Twenty years after the battle of Ivry, the prophecy was to be fulfilled by the knife of Ravaillac.

His exasperation against the renegades, and against the proselytisers, Duperron,<sup>1</sup> d'Ossat, and their friends, inspired one of the best of his controversial satires, the *Confession of Sancy*. Sancy, the colonel of the Swiss guard, was one of the apostates who chose to identify their faith with that of the king, but the scope of the diatribe is sufficiently wide to include other victims of the same character, with simple compromisers like Sully and Hurault, favourites of the former king like d'Épernon, and of the reigning king, like Bellegarde. The satire, as we now have it, is a composite work, which seems to have accumulated

<sup>1</sup> Duperron was the principal agent in the conversion of Henry IV., and it was he who managed the reconciliation with the Holy See. He was rewarded with a cardinal's hat, which, doubtless, went far towards rendering him callous to the stinging invectives of d'Aubigné, and to such popular lampoons as the Latin doggrel, which began in this fashion—

"Franci vos quotquot estis;  
Audite me si potestis,

Et digito du Perronem  
Istum monstrate lenonem "

during the period from 1599 to 1606, ending with an account of certain miraculous conversions by Mathurine, a fair ally of the Cardinal's. It is indeed something more than a satire, dealing freely with religious dogmas, with grace and good works, with transubstantiation and image-worship, aiming as much at controverting as at scarifying the proselytisers. Sancy has been taken in hand by Duperron, who knew how to make a religious conversion chime in with the temper of a worldling and a courtier; and he has his lesson well by heart. He firmly believes in *grace*—for it is the instinct of his heart to rely upon the grace of the king; in *works*—for “it is by good and laudable works that so many people have earned a place in the paradise of France.” As for *transubstantiation*, the miracle is easy of belief, for is not the country full of examples? “The sweat of a wretched labourer changes into the fat of a prosperous partisan or treasurer. The marrow of the fingers of a Gaseon vine-dresser, who rejoices the heart of all, fills the stomach of a parasite. . . . The blood of a soldier, lost in driving d’Epernon from Provence, is turned into hyposcras. As for the host of the Rose of Blois, we see him converted in these days into M. de Bussy-Guibert. . . . The taxes of France have transubstantiated the labourer’s fields into grass patches, the vineyards into waste lands, the labourers into beggars, the soldiers into thieves, with little of the miraculous, serfs into gentlemen, servants into masters, masters into servants.”

There was not much reticence or discrimination in the satirical mood of d’Aubigné when once fairly roused; he struck about him, sparing none, and more easily moved to indignation than to pity. Nothing could be more savage than some of his brochures; the fiercest of all, if it is rightly attributed to him, is the *Divorce Satirique*, in which he puts into the mouth of Henry a bitter reproach against his dissolute queen, Marguerite, which prepared the way for an actual

divorce.<sup>1</sup> The king's second wife, Mary de Medici, showed no particular gratitude to her husband's trusted counsellor; for during the long regency after Henry's death d'Aubigné was an exile from court, and he took his revenge by writing the *Adventures of the Baron de Fœneste*.<sup>2</sup> The hero of this satirical romance is a Gascon courtier, the burlesque type of the hollow and ostentatious court, the *Faux-semblant* of the seventeenth century.

The greatest of d'Aubigné's satires, as great and powerful in its way as the satires of Rabelais, and that on which his fame has chiefly hung, was a poem commenced as early as 1577. So trenchant, indeed, did the author conceive it to be that he abstained from publishing it until he was an old man, when the events out of which it immediately arose had become matters of history, and when the lessons which it taught appeared rather as a natural outcome of a literary essay than as the violent blows of a controversialist. Infinitely superior to Ronsard, the *Tragiques* may yet not unfairly be attributed to Ronsard's school, although the work was to the *Misères du Temps* of the master much what the *Satire Ménippée* was to an average Huguenot diatribe. It was in the *Tragiques* that d'Aubigné exemplified the intensity of his acute literary genius, the bitterness of his consuming hatred for corruption in high places. The spirit of Juvenal, or, better, the spirit of the Hebrew prophets in face of the old-world tyrannies, is matched

<sup>1</sup> Henry IV. was really as dissolute as Marguerite. The *Amours du Grand Alexandre* tell some strange stories about the king and his royal amours.

<sup>2</sup> From the Greek *φαίεσθαι*, to seem. The late M. P. Mérimée, a literary man and a senator, attacking d'Aubigné in his preface to the *Aventures du Baron de Fœneste*, calls him "a grumbler . . . no doubt wanting the necessary qualities for the exercise of authority. . . naturally snappish, quarrelsome and jeering, never being able to keep back a *bon-mot*. . . a biting poet, a dangerous swordsman, a theologian full of quotations; one did not know how to take him: in beginning with him one could only gain an epigram or a sword stroke, sometimes both. Thus, feared by every one, esteemed by some, he had very few friends, and I do not know if he loved any one." <sup>1</sup> doubt if d'Aubigné's character could be understood by M. Mérimée.

and surpassed by the overwhelming indignation of this colossal censor of the sixteenth century, to whom the last of the house of Valois was at once the Ahab and the Heliogabalus of unhappy France. Never was the adage, *facit indignatio versum*, better illustrated than in this case ; never were the circumstances and the man more aptly disposed for the evolution of a bitter and brilliant invective. It was whilst he lay on a sick-bed at Castel-Jaloux,<sup>1</sup> slowly recovering from the wounds which he had received in attacking "the enemies of the Lord," that d'Aubigné conceived and began to work out his satire, dictating to his friend, the judge of the district, the first burning couplets which he imagined were to be his last testament of reproach. He had seen "the dying face of the captive Church ;" he had seen the blood and the anguish of his country, and his wrath bursts out in a torrent against those who had imbrued their hands in her blood :—

"O desolate France! O bloodthirsty earth!  
(Not earth, but ashes!) O mother, if it be the act of a mother  
To betray her infants by the delights of her bosom,  
And, when they are murdered, to grasp them with her hand ;  
Thou givest them their life, and beneath thy breast  
The bloody quarrel of the headstrong brood is excited."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The seat of the Lords d'Albret, where d'Aubigné commanded a small force for several years. It was his friend Jeanne d'Albret who wrote to her son Henry IV., fascinated by the charms of Marguerite de Valois : "Je désire que vous vous retiriez de cette corruption."

<sup>2</sup> "O France désolée, O terre sanguinaire !  
(Non pas terre mais cendre !) O mère, si c'est mère,  
Que trahir ses enfants aux douceurs de son sein,  
Et, quand on les meurtrit, les serrer de sa main :  
Tu leur donnes la vie, et, dessous ta mamelle,  
S'émeut des obstinés la sanglante querelle.  
... Vous avez, felons, ensanglanté  
Le sein qui vous nourrit et qui vous a porté :  
Or, vivez de venin, sanglante geniture ;  
Je n'ai plus que du sang pour vostre nourriture."

*Les Tragiques*, bk. i. ; *Misères*.



And the mother herself turns round upon her children :

“Felons, you have steeped in blood  
The bosom which nursed and bore you ;  
Feed then on poison, sanguinary generation ;  
I have nought left but blood wherewith to nourish you.”

A terrible picture of the times is that which d'Aubigné draws, not by implication, but in burning words ; not in mere satire, but with overflowing indignation. He says :—

“Our resting-places are foreign lands ;  
The inland towns are become frontier towns ;  
The village is on its defence, and our very houses  
Are as a rule garrisons and prisons.  
The honest burgher, model of his town,  
Sees his wife and daughter outraged before his eyes,  
And falls under the insolent and merciless hand  
Which, a while ago, was held out to beg for bread. . . .  
The hundred-years old peasant, whose hoary head  
Has become covered with snow as he followed his plough,  
Sees galloping from afar the blustering musketeer,  
Who with rude hand, mad with hunger and rage,  
Plucks out the grey hair which is the old man's pride,  
Because he has found nothing to plunder in the village.”<sup>1</sup>

*Les Tragiques*, as finally completed, is divided into seven books, whereof the first is devoted to a description of the

<sup>1</sup> “Les places de repos sont places étrangères ;  
Les villes du milieu sont les villes frontières :  
Le village se garde, et nos propres maisons  
Nous sont le plus souvent garnisons et prisons.  
L'honorable bourgeois, l'exemple de sa ville,  
Souffre devant ses yeux outrager femme et fille,  
Et tombe, sans merci, sous l'insolente main  
Qui s'étendait naguère à mendier du pain. . . .  
Le paysan de cent ans, dont la tête chenue  
S'est couverte de neige en suivant sa charrue,  
Voit galoper de loin l'argoulet orageux,  
Qui d'une rude main arrache les cheveux,  
L'honneur du vieillard blanc, mû de faim et de rage  
Pour n'avoir pu trouver que piller au village.”

miseries under which France was groaning ; the second, best known and perhaps most exclusively satirical, draws the portraits of the House of Valois, concerning whom the author says " that the steel of his verse shall engrave their history in the presence of the universe." The third book attacks the Parliaments and judges, whose severity was reserved for the adherents of the reformed faith, and under an allegorical form it scarifies many a vice, many an individual, with irresistible force.<sup>1</sup> The fourth book, which has been called the French Protestants' martyrology, describes the butcheries of the Huguenots, and is a song of lamentation, and a prophecy of victory for the victims. The fifth book takes us to heaven, where God, his court, and Satan are brought together, and Satan records his triumphs on earth. In the sixth book the author cries aloud for vengeance :—" Come, just avengers, let all the earth come to these French Cains, to demand, in an immortal war, vengeance for the blood of their slaughtered brethren." The seventh book announces the judgment which God will administer upon the persecutors of his saints :—" Ye cities,<sup>2</sup> drunk with blood, and still wanting more, who thirst for blood and with blood are intoxicated, ye shall feel the terrible hand of God ; your land shall be iron, and your heaven brass." One may appreciate, what the limits of our work will not permit us to show more at length, the biting ferocity and the rude strength of d'Aubigné's satire.

<sup>1</sup> Take, for example, the following picture of Ignorance, drawn, doubtless, from its living impersonations :—

" Ses petits yeux charnus sourcilient sans repos,  
Sa grand' bouche demeure ouverte à tout propos ;  
Elle n'a sentiment de pitié ni misère :  
Toute cause lui est indifférente et claire.  
Son livre est le commun, sa loi ce qui lui plaît,  
Elle dit *ad idem*, puis demande que c'est."

<sup>2</sup> " Cités ivres de sang et encore altérées,  
Qui avez soif de sang et de sang enivrées,  
Vous sentirez de Dieu l'épouvantable main ;  
Vos terres seront fer et votre ciel d'airain."

In his *Universal History*, and in his *Memoirs*, properly called *Sa vie à ses enfants*, d'Aubigné was calmer, more impartial, not to say more dignified, than in his controversial poems and pamphlets. His prose style is full of vigour, the product of a lofty and earnest spirit, the studied work of one who looks to be read by succeeding generations. He had formed his mode of literary expression upon the grandest models of ancient times. No writer of the sixteenth century more frequently reminds us of the Latin poets and historians. An hour's turning of the pages brings to our memory a line or sentence from Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, and Livy. His letters (whereof a large proportion were first given to the world as recently as 1873)<sup>1</sup> are penetrated by the same refined tone, and breathe the *perfervidum ingenium* of a noble enthusiast. Enthusiast he was, more or less, in everything which he touched, with sufficient moral courage to support the position which his taste or principles led him to take up. Before we pass on let us observe him in another mood, as a *virtuoso*, stoutly maintaining his opinion against the friendly strictures of de Lanoue,<sup>2</sup> to whom he addresses a letter which begins as follows :—

“ Sir—I cannot forget that, being at Paris, and returning with you from an excellent concert of a guitar, twelve viols, four spinets, four lutes, two *pandores* and two theorbos, as I was about to depart enraptured you invited me to come and to let me listen to something else, if I would enter your house ; and that you would take then la Planche, your valet, and your footman, and that it would be a marvel compared with what we had heard. You and M. de Constans always reproach me for loving

<sup>1</sup> By M. M. Eugène Réaume and de Caussade.

<sup>2</sup> This letter was, in my opinion, not addressed to the celebrated Protestant commander, who was about twenty years older than d'Aubigné, and who was also the author of twenty-six *Discours politiques et militaires* about the civil wars, the education of the nobility, military tactics, etc. ; but to his son Odet de Lanoue, lord de Téliigny, himself a poet, and of nearly the same age as d'Aubigné.

a loud noise, and for not sufficiently understanding the composition of music to relish a trio or duo after a piece of six or seven instruments. It is in vain for me to tell you that I am delighted with a simple vocal trio, admiring the art of the composer ; and this is a pleasure of the mind. I confess that I greatly love to feed the senses when there is the same mental pleasure in it.”<sup>1</sup>

D'Aubigné, after having been married for a second time about ten years, died at Geneva, and, as might have been expected, in exile. He was then nearly eighty years old, and it is said that on his deathbed he faintly muttered, “ The happy day has come . . . glory be to God ; let us delight in it.” So died a man who would not change his convictions, even to please a king, and that king his friend ; who, in his youth, sacrificed all his prospects of love and ambition rather than commit a base action ; and who, during his long and arduous career, never belied his character as an honest man, and as a steady but sincere Calvinist. Though stern to himself, his friends, and his enemies, he felt deeply. When he discovered that his son Constant was steeped in vices, and had become a spy and a traitor, he tore him from his heart and cursed him ; when he lost his first wife, Suzanne de Lezai, the blow stunned him for nearly three years, and his lamentations are even now painful to read. In his *History*, as well as in his *Memoirs*, proofs of deep feeling abound, and after having read them, we come to the conclusion that men like d'Aubigné were scarce in his time, and are not plentiful even now.

## § 2. COURTIER-HISTORIANS.

D'Aubigné, as we have seen, was pleased by few men and with few things in his age, and his works are distinguished by a strong propensity to censure. It was a literary tone which

<sup>1</sup> *Oeuvres complètes de Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné*, ed. by M. M. Réaume and de Caussade, vol. i. p. 465.



harmonised only too well with the epoch in which he lived ; and the rôle was played by more than two or three of the best amongst his contemporaries. But to different eyes the same object conveys different impressions ; and the many historians, diarists, and writers of memoirs in the sixteenth century, though they agree in representing their age as one of sanguinary strife and great corruption, vary much in the spirit with which they treat of passing events, and in the lessons or the entertainment which they extract from them. Pierre de Bourdeille, lord of Brantôme,<sup>1</sup> is, like d'Aubigné, a censor ; but, unlike d'Aubigné, he was not a moral censor, though he admires the character, as is evident in the eulogy which he passes upon de l'Hôpital.<sup>2</sup> Very wide, however, was the distinction between these two serious and venerable men and the light-hearted, light-tongued biographer and scandalmonger who has given us such a piquant account of the men and women of his generation. Brantôme was as much shocked as any of his contemporaries at the corruption of the times ; but it was with the "Fie, for shame !" of a man who sees to the end the scandal which he reprobates, and subsequently relates it to his friends with an air of mystery and a conscientious minuteness.

Pierre de Bourdeille was brought up at the court of Marguerite of Navarre, sister of Francis the First ; and it was from her nephew, Henry II., that he received the rich abbey of Brantôme : a gift which constituted him to the end of his life rather a courtier than an abbé. He farmed out his religious duties, and travelled much ; both in the wake of the court of the Valois, and beyond the seas. He went, as he tells us himself, "into Italy, into Scotland by sea, and through France by land ;" and he delights in letting us know the

<sup>1</sup> 1527-1614.

<sup>2</sup> "That man was a second Cato the Censor, and knew very well how to censure and correct the corrupt world. He thoroughly looked the part, with his long white beard, his pale face, his grave mien."

favour with which the great people everywhere received him. Of the women especially, even if they were his hosts, even if it were the Queen of England herself, he has something to tell which redounds rather to his own renown than to their credit. Not that he sees the real effect of his words, or suspects that his very praise is compromising. He can say nothing but what is favourable of Catherine de Medici, of Marguerite of Valois, of Mary Stuart. He was one of Mary's companions in her flight from France to Scotland, and ever afterwards he can remember her only as a martyr and a victim of cruelty, on whom the world had lavished "lies and abuse." The description of the voyage has been often quoted ; but we may find excuse for transferring one passage of it direct from Brantôme's pages.

"Just as she was making up her mind to leave the harbour, and as the oars were on the point of being set to work, she saw a ship put out to sea, and sink and perish before her eyes, and the greater part of the sailors drowned. . . . And seeing this, she at once exclaimed : 'Ah, God ! what an omen for a voyage is this !' And the boat having left the harbour, and a slight wind having arisen, they took to the sails, and the oarsmen rested. She could think of nothing else to do but lean with her arms upon the stern of the vessel, beside the helm, and melt into a great fit of weeping, stedfastly casting her lovely eyes upon the harbour, and the town which she had quitted, ever and anon uttering these sad words : 'Adieu, France ! Adieu, France !'—repeating them from time to time. And this mournful fit lasted nearly five hours, until night came on, and they asked her if she would not tear herself away, and take something to eat. Then, weeping more than ever, she said : 'Now at last, then, dear France, I lose you for ever from my sight, for the dark night is jealous of my pleasure in beholding you as long as I could, and draws a black veil before my eyes, to deprive me of such a joy. Adieu, then, dear France ; I shall see you never more.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vie des Dames Illustres*. His other principal works are entitled *Hommes Illustres*, *Capitaines étrangers*, *Dames galantes*, and *Duels*.

Pathetic passages such as this, and passages of graphic and salacious descriptions, which we have not courage to quote, are the most characteristic of the writings of Brantôme. Clear, candid, prolix, loose, and slipshod in style, he is less of a literary model than of a suggestive and entertaining painter of social habits and characters. A historian and a satirist, he is so rather in spite of himself than in accordance with rule. He is the Grammont and the Pepys of his age, who, if he could have kept his eyes upon its best rather than upon its worst features, might possibly have been its Plutarch.

Amongst the graver, and at the same time more commonplace and less readable contemporaries of d'Aubigné and Brantôme, who wrote the history of their generation and the memoirs of its prominent men, Philippe de Mornay,<sup>1</sup> lord du Plessis-Marly, deserves a distinguished place. A diplomatist, a soldier, and a commentator, his writings have had a decided value in the eyes of all subsequent historians as those of a man who played no inconsiderable part in the events of the civil and religious wars of France.<sup>2</sup> More replete, more familiar, more communicative of the secret history of the age are the memoirs of Pierre de l'Estoile,<sup>3</sup> a Parisian bourgeois, to whom no scrap of gossip came amiss, and who has left us the small-talk of his day, set down as carefully as though it were the state papers upon which the history of the country was to be shaped. His *Journal of Henry III. and Henry IV.* is charged with petty details of the most everyday life; and yet hardly any writer of the same epoch supplies us with so much minutely accurate material towards a full appreciation of the character of the times. His *Manifesto of the Ladies of the Court* attains to a higher literary standard,

<sup>1</sup> 1549-1623.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Messire Philippes de Mornay, seigneur du Plessis-Marli, etc.*, of which the first and second volume appeared at La Forest in 1624 and 1625, the third and fourth at Amsterdam in 1652.

<sup>3</sup> 1546-1611.

and is more nearly a genuine satire than a history ; though, in point of fact, it is neither. The annals of the latter half of the sixteenth century could not be so much as undertaken without the assistance of l'Estoile ; and yet he is no more, in himself, an annalist of his own generation than a stack of new-made bricks is a finished house.

The end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century embraced several writers of greatly superior historical instinct to that of l'Estoile, and of a capacity and breadth at least equal to those of de Mornay. The *Letters* of Cardinal d'Ossat,<sup>1</sup> who must be coupled with Duperron as having contributed to bring about the conversion of Henry IV., and the *Negotiations* of Jeannin,<sup>2</sup> have been described by a recent writer<sup>3</sup> as the two classics of diplomatists and politicians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ; whilst Lord Chesterfield recommends the first work to his son as the most fit to prepare him for public business.<sup>4</sup> The praise is scarcely exaggerated ; and in fact d'Ossat may claim much of the credit of having sharpened and polished the keen point of that supple and well-tempered style which was for centuries, and is to a large extent even in the present day, the diplomatic instrument of the courts of Europe.

Armand d'Ossat began his public life as secretary to Paul de Foix, ambassador of France at the Court of Sixtus V. ; and most of the letters in which he communicated to his royal master the ideas and wishes of the Pope during so many delicate negotiations, were drawn up—it is said—by the young diplomatist. So serviceable was d'Ossat, and so skilful in his conduct of affairs, that Henry IV. eagerly availed himself of his services, and kept him in an unofficial capacity at Rome during the sojourn of successive representatives of

<sup>1</sup> 1536-1604.

<sup>2</sup> 1546-1622.

<sup>3</sup> Poirson, *Histoire de Henri IV.*, vol. ii. p. 497.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of the 20th of July, 1747.



France at the sacred College, and until his reconciliation with the Holy See was finally completed by Duperron. "When Duperron arrived," says M. Henri Martin,<sup>1</sup> on the 12th of July 1595, he found the business well advanced by d'Ossat. . . . On the 30th of July du Perron and d'Ossat presented the king's petition to the Holy Father." D'Ossat himself<sup>2</sup> gives us the words of this petition, doubtless the product of his own pen; wherein Henry prayed Clement VIII. to sanction the absolution already accorded him by the French prelates, and sought from the Pope "his sovereign absolution from the censures incurred by him and declared against him in respect of his past errors, for the greater safety and repose of his soul, and for the good of his whole kingdom, and for the reconciliation and reunion of the said kingdom with the Holy See." And when the absolution of the Pope had been finally accorded by the Sacred College, and the time arrived for its declaration, "the choristers intoned the *Miserere*; at each verse the Pope, with a small whip, smote alternately Duperron and d'Ossat, kneeling at his feet; then the Holy Father rose, repeated the formula of absolution with his own mouth, and declared that he received Henry into the pale of the Church, naming him King of France and most Christian."<sup>3</sup>

That little whip was worth a bishopric to d'Ossat, who, it is asserted, recoiled from the humiliation inflicted on him vicariously for his royal master. He afterwards became a

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de France*, vol. x., *sub ann.* 1595.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de d'Ossat*, vol. i. p. 462, ed. d'Amsterdam, 1708.

<sup>3</sup> It hardly pertains to our sketch of the literary history of France to point out that there was one who did still more to bring about Henry's abjuration of Protestantism, than either Duperron or d'Ossat—the beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrées, afterwards Duchess de Beaufort. It was she who urged the king to make his peace with Rome; she who impelled him to his action against the Franche-Comté; she who is accused of contriving the death of the Duke of Longueville; she again, who, it is said, inspired her royal lover with a sweet love-song.

cardinal and died, as he had lived, an honest though a poor man.

Jeannin, president of the Parliament of Dijon, in his youth an ardent partisan of the League, was a diplomatist of the highest order. Successively ambassador in Spain and Belgium, he showed himself in this and in every other capacity a patriotic Frenchman and a conscientious servant of the state. It was he who, on the general council of the League, before the final triumph of Henry IV., steadily resisted the encroaching influences of Spain in French affairs, and who dissuaded the Duke of Mayenne, over whom he exerted the power of a strong mind over a merely obstinate will, from accepting the disgraceful offers of assistance from the Spanish court. A year or two later he induced Mayenne to come to terms with Henry, and himself conducted the negotiations upon which the treaty of Folembray was based ; thus giving the *coup de grâce* to the League. He was sent by Henry to represent him at the court of the States-General ; and, after the king's death, was one of the most trusted and prudent counsellors of Mary de Medici. Into his hands fell the direction of the national finances upon the resignation of Sully ; and, most significant and honourable act in the life of so thorough a Catholic, it was Jeannin who, in his old age, did what lay in his power to induce a peace with the Huguenots.<sup>1</sup>

As a diplomatist Jeannin is especially famous for his mission to the United Provinces, which was attended by most important results, and virtually secured for Holland its independent position among the European states. Here, as elsewhere, Jeannin placed himself in direct opposition to the policy of Spain ; and the counsels of the French ambassador, together with the moral aid which he induced his royal master to extend to Holland, contributing as these services did to the attainment of independence by the Seven Provinces, struck

<sup>1</sup> 1622.

the first great blow at the overweening despotism of Spain. Jeannin, however, has a more legitimate claim upon our notice even in respect of his mission in Holland. Himself an author, he was at all times a willing patron of literary men, and he proved on many occasions that he could play the part of Mæcenas with grace and effect. At Leyden, amongst the refugees who had fled before the storm which Jeannin himself had been indirectly instrumental in raising, he found the learned Scaliger, living in comparative poverty and neglect. He endeavoured, without success, to secure for him the payment of a pension promised years before by Henry III. Writing to de Thou, after the death of Scaliger, Jeannin says: "M. de l'Escalle (Scaliger) is much regretted here, where his virtues and great proficiency in letters have been better recognised than in France; and in truth it is a shame that we took no more care of him whilst he was alive. But they who could have inclined the mind of the king to recall and honour him . . . neglected to do so, and I, who would have attempted it, was not powerful enough to procure for him the competence which he no longer needs. I should have liked to attend his funeral, but, as we are here engaged upon affairs for which it has pleased the king to send me hither, I could not pay him this last duty, to my great regret."

There were not wanting amongst the authors of this eventful age, men who were not content with describing the actions which passed before their eyes, but who attempted in addition to draw from them the lessons which they seemed to involve, and who approach, by however slight a degree, towards the philosophy of history. Of these, the most noteworthy were Tavannes and Sully. The *Memoirs* of Marshal Gaspard de Saulx de Tavannes,<sup>1</sup> are less a bare history of facts than a medley of battles and politics, of commentaries and excursions upon almost every imaginable subject; the

<sup>1</sup> 1509-1573.

slightest suggestion being sufficient to set the biographer discoursing of assassinations, fortifications, avarice, alchemy, education, the philosophy of death, and what not. The Tavannes—with the exception of William, the eldest son of the Marshal—were orthodox and prejudiced Catholics, strong supporters of the League, with a bitter hatred of Protestantism, and a contemptuous disbelief in the merits and genuineness of Henry IV. The testimony of the historian must therefore be taken with discrimination; but the work is nevertheless not without its historical value, and not without a certain degree of literary merit.

D'Aubigné was not the only Protestant statesman and historian of his time who afforded a conspicuous example of the powerful, and for the most part beneficial influences produced by the reformed religion upon the tone and temper of the sixteenth century. He had his parallel, from many points of view, in Maximilien de Béthune, Duke de Sully,<sup>1</sup> who, like him, was an intimate friend of Henry IV., a grave, common-sense, and cool-headed Protestant, a soldier and a statesman, and who, like d'Aubigné, had neither the chance nor the disposition to dance attendance at the court of Mary de Medici, after the star of Henry had set. Both men display the candour, the moral breadth and height, the calmness and self-restraint, which have been the distinguishing qualities of the French Protestants in literature as in public and private life, and which they have inherited as much from the stern discipline of persecution as from the natural effects of an attitude of conscientious opposition to authority. The writings of the earlier Huguenots are characterised by nothing more than by their purity of conception, and their freedom from unclean suggestions and meretricious adornments. Malice they have in abundance—satire, as we have seen, of the keenest order; but they are, as a rule, pre-eminently pure and serious.

<sup>1</sup> 1560-1641



D'Aubigné is the type of the class at its highest and strongest ; Sully perhaps comes nearest to his standard, though with less of dignity, still less of satirical force, and infinitely more of self-esteem and triviality.

If d'Aubigné was the loyal servant of Henry the Fourth, Sully aimed at being above all things his useful servant. No doubt he was sincerely attached to the king. He had been his companion from childhood, and he appears to have given his royal patron uniformly wise and prudent advice. It is alleged of him that his extreme jealousy and the fear of being supplanted by counsellors of the orthodox faith led him to malign his rivals in the king's affection ; that Villeroy, de Mornay, Jeannin, and others, suffered thus at his hands. But it was at all events natural that he should have genuinely distrusted the counsels of the Roman Catholics, and warned the monarch against them with a good conscience. As a minister of finance, to whose charge was intrusted the superintendence of the national revenues and expenditure, Sully acquitted himself with great credit. According to a financial report, published in 1609, the Government had, since Sully's administration, paid off one hundred million francs, was in treaty to redeem thirty to thirty-five million francs of domains and stock, had an income of about twenty millions, a reserve of twenty to twenty-two millions, of which sixteen or seventeen millions was in silver ; the arsenals were full of arms and ammunition, and many galleys completely fitted out were in the harbours of the Mediterranean. This proves that Sully was undoubtedly a first-rate financier, and that the services which he rendered to the State in this capacity were by no means inconsiderable. As a soldier he had proved himself often brave, and not seldom venturesome. Besides this he was superintendent of the fortifications and grand-master of the artillery. Yet, a year after the death of Henry IV., in the year 1611, he was removed from office ; or rather, as we

are informed by de l'Estoile,<sup>1</sup> "he preferred asking for his dismissal to waiting until it was given him."

The work by which Sully is best known to us is the *Memoirs*, written under his direction by four secretaries, in his country seat at Villebon. The title is in itself a long quotation, and, more or less, an epitome of the work.<sup>1</sup> All that it says or implies—at all events of Sully—is true, and the examples are copious and minute. Certainly the book is not amusing reading. The long periods and prolix narratives, professedly addressed by the secretaries to their master, are, no doubt, the product of their amalgamated styles. The matter is for the most part Sully's own, and it is in fact a monument of the practical, patient, sober, and serious statesmanship of the sixteenth century. We must keep fresh in our memory the character of such men as de l'Hôpital, d'Aubigné, and Sully, if only for the purpose of contrasting them with certain of the counsellors of France who lived a century and a couple of centuries later.

<sup>1</sup> *Régistre Journal de Louis XIII.*, sub. ann.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires des sages et royales économies d'Etat, domestiques, politiques et militaires de Henry le Grand, l'exemplaire des roys, le prince des vertus, des armes et des loix, et le père en effet de ses peuples françois, et des servitudes utiles, obéissances concevables et administrations loyales de Maximilien de Béthune, l'un des plus confidens, familiers et utiles soldats et serviteurs du grand Mars des François. Dédiez à la France, à tous les bons soldats et tous peuples françois.*

## CHAPTER VI.

## § 1. RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY IN THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE.

To the pulpit eloquence of the preachers of the League, and to the controversial quasi-religious pamphlets of the Civil War, succeeded, towards the close of the sixteenth century, a graver and calmer eloquence of the pen, which, coupled with the scholarship of the later Renaissance, resulted in a distinct forward movement towards a definite philosophy of religion and morals. The sword had done, or was about to complete, its task, and Roman Catholic orthodoxy was to give its tone and colour to the religious literature of France. The ecclesiastics of the reign of Henry IV. were to impress the stamp of Rome upon the majority of the devotional and controversial writings of the epoch; Cardinal Duperron, Saint François de Sales, Camus, were to bestow upon these works the refulgence of lofty rhetoric and genuine piety. And behind them was to come Pascal, no less pious, no less eloquent, infinitely more Catholic in any sense of the word except their own: Pascal, the great moral reformer of his day, who could evolve the philosophy of religion without creating dogmas, and who could dress its doctrine in rhetoric without launching an anathema against those who were deaf to the charm of his eloquence.

Jacques Davy Duperron,<sup>1</sup> was the son of a Protestant

<sup>1</sup> 1556-1618.

minister, and when quite young, became a Catholic. He had won his way to the king's right hand, and to the highest dignities of the Church, by sheer power of tongue and grace of manner. It is recorded of him that, after he had entered the Sacred College, Paul V. said on one occasion: "Let us pray God to inspire Cardinal Duperron, for he will persuade us whatever he chooses." Eloquence alone does not persuade. In a bad cause it is, with discriminating hearers, more likely to repel; but the genius of Duperron was subtle and logical. He was at once the preacher and the disputant, and it was to him that Henry IV. was wont to send those whom he desired to bring round to his adopted faith. We could have no better testimony to his peculiar power than that of Casaubon, one of those objects of the royal solicitude. "Of a truth," says the scholar, "*he is fulmen hominis*. I have resisted hitherto, but I must confess to you that he has raised in me many scruples which abide, and to which I know not how to make good answer." Still more notable and better known is his victory over de Mornay, who had asserted in his *Institution of the Eucharist* that the mass was unknown in the earlier ages of Christianity, and whom Duperron signally worsted before the king at Fontainebleau, displaying infinite skill in fence, vast erudition, remarkable spirit, and courtesy in debate. It is hardly surprising that Bossuet should apostrophise such a man as a "rare and admirable genius, whose works, well-nigh divine, are the strongest rampart of the Church against modern heretics."

Duperron's extravagant eulogy of Ronsard, in the funeral oration which he pronounced upon the poet's death in 1586, undoubtedly says more for his eloquence than for his literary acumen, or even for his judgment. His writings everywhere confirm the observation. The bulk of them consists of sermons, chiefly upon points of doctrine, which he treats with all the ardour and enthusiasm, tempered with elegant mode-



ration of style, natural to a polished controversialist. Let us quote from one of these sermons—and it is easy to give a sample of what is homogeneous ; not so much on account of their intrinsic merits as because they were, in point of fact, models of the pulpit eloquence of succeeding generations, to which not even Bossuet himself might have disdained to turn. It is half-a-dozen sentences from the peroration of his sermon on the Holy Ghost ; and observe the balance of style and of thought, the persuasive adornment of the clear and rounded periods, which must have gone straight to the heart of his hearers :—

“ And Thou, O most holy, most high, most glorious Spirit, who givest kings to their peoples and pastors to the Churches, source of all order, spiritual and temporal, author of all discipline, ecclesiastical and political . . . Spirit of peace and unity, in honour of whom we are here assembled, listen to the prayers of those who invoke Thee, and beseech Thee for the reunion of Thy Church. This day we celebrate the day whereon, by Thy visible descent, Thou didst make of all the souls of the believers one soul, and of all hearts one heart. Even so make them now by Thy invisible descent, and unite again in the one body of Christ all who bear the name of Christian. Bring back to the flock of the Shepherd of shepherds all who have wandered away from Him, and keep in it all who have remained. To those give grace to return to the way of salvation ; to these give the grace of perseverance.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Et toi, ô très-saint, très-haut, très-glorieux Esprit qui donnes les rois aux peuples et les pasteurs aux églises, source de tout ordre spirituel et temporel, auteur de toute discipline ecclésiastique et politique . . . Esprit de paix et d'unité, en honneur duquel nous sommes ici assemblés, écoute les vœux de ceux qui t'invoquent et te réclament pour la réunion de ton église. Nous célébrons aujourd'hui le jour auquel, par ta descente visible, tu fis, de toutes les âmes des croyants, une âme, et de tous les cœurs, un cœur. Fais encore de même maintenant par ta descente invisible, et rassemble tous ceux qui portent le nom de chrétiens en un même corps de Christ. Ramène au troupeau du pasteur des pasteurs tous ceux qui s'en sont écartés, et y conserve tous ceux qui y sont demeurés. Donne aux uns la grâce de revenir au chemin du salut ; donne aux autres celle d'y persévérer.”

A greater orator than Duperron, who, if he had possessed the same worldly disposition, might have risen to higher worldly dignities, and who, if he had not been made a saint, might have attained a still greater literary fame than he now enjoys, was François de Sales,<sup>1</sup> originally a priest, then an advocate at Chambéry, and again a priest, but who found his true vocation in the ranks of the priesthood. An enthusiastic Catholic, he set himself almost single-handed to oppose the spread of Protestantism in Savoy, and he succeeded to a remarkable degree. The fame of his piety and eloquence penetrated to the capital, so that when he came to Paris with a petition to Henry IV. to guarantee the exercise of religious liberty in Gex,<sup>2</sup> he was more than once invited to preach before the Court, and by his sermons alone made many converts to the orthodox creed. Persuasive and conciliatory, ready of wit and skilful in controversy, learned, too, as the Cardinal Duperron frankly declares, above all the logicians of his day, he could be at times vehement and even violent in his declamation.<sup>3</sup> His choice was nevertheless deliberately made for the style which "savours rather of love to one's neighbour than of indignation—love even for the Huguenots, whom we must treat with great compassion, not flattering, but commiserating them." Such was the advice which he gave to the Archbishop of Bourges, to whom he addressed a letter on *The True Mode of Preaching*.

The proselytising zeal of François de Sales was manifested on many occasions, and earned for him the great triumphs and fame of his life. He accepted a mission from the Pope to attempt the reconversion of Theodore de Beza, and went secretly, on four separate occasions, to the house of the latter

<sup>1</sup> 1567-1622.

<sup>2</sup> The neighbouring Protestants of Geneva seem to have extended their authority over Gex, although it was within the French frontier.

<sup>3</sup> Sayous, *Histoire de la littérature française à l'étranger au dix-septième siècle*, vol. i. p. 15.

in Geneva. In the end, Beza admitted that he thought it possible to be saved within the pale of the Catholic Church : which has been hailed as a notable victory for the future saint, but which is the only one reaped by him on that occasion. At another time, we are told, he declared himself ready to undertake the conversion of James I. of England : but for some reason or other the holy Father did not think well to fly his hawk—if such a gentle preacher may be called so—at such a conspicuous quarry. This mode of evangelisation was much in vogue amongst the contemporaries of François de Sales ; and it must be confessed that the example afforded by the recantation of Henry IV., added possibly to a natural desire of wiping out the traditions of the St. Bartholomew's massacre, and the memory of that affectionate missionary Gabrielle d'Estrées, were well calculated to stimulate the milder processes of the Church of Rome.

Madame de Charmois, the young and worldly wife of a relative of de Sales, hearing the bishop preach in Geneva,<sup>1</sup> was weaned on the spot from her life of pleasure and fashion, and resolved to devote herself to a life of piety. François de Sales hailed her resolution with delight, and sent her from time to time a number of familiar directions and counsels to aid her in the task of perseverance. Two years afterwards her confessor persuaded the bishop to arrange these letters in order, and to give them to the public. Such was the occasion and the origin of the *Introduction à la vie dévote*.<sup>2</sup> It is useless to attempt an analysis of this “art of divine love,” as this work has been aptly termed. Such science as its method contains—and its author disclaims for it even the credit of method—is but the succession of confirmation in good resolves,

<sup>1</sup> The bishopric of Geneva was the sole reward which François de Sales could be prevailed upon to accept, in 1602, at the hands of the Duke of Savoy. After his death de Sales was canonised.

<sup>2</sup> Published in 1608.

exercise in the acts of devotion, gradual elevation and expansion of lofty aims, with the consolations and refreshments of a purified soul, through which most of us have to pass before attaining the hard residuum of experience that we can carry with us to the grave. The *Introduction* was addressed to Philothée, a pseudonym for the "Baroness de Charmoisy;" and its publication was a great success, and caused a wonderful sensation. It was almost immediately translated into all European languages, and forty editions were sold from its first publication until the year 1656. It seems to have suggested to François de Sales a second devotional work, which he was eight years in composing: *Philothée, ou traité de l'amour de Dieu*. These works, his *Sermons*, *Letters*, and one or two smaller treatises, comprising the *Standard of the Cross*, *Spiritual Conversations*, and the like, constitute his literary remains.

Not much, we fear, can be said for the style of these works, which are scarcely as clear, and decidedly less balanced and eloquent than those of Duperron. Three sentences to a page are something like the average measure of prolixity—a prolixity, be it understood, not of a weak man who is doubtful of his own meaning, but of a man firm and clear in his ideas, whose words overflow simply through the richness of his expanding thoughts. Let us take from the *Introduction* three sentences—to wit, "On True Friendships," which at all events contain a distinct conception, clearly and fully illustrated, with abundance of support and of decoration.

"Many, it may be, will tell you that you should have no kind of special affection and friendship, inasmuch as that occupies the heart, distracts the mind, gives rise to desires; but they are mistaken in their advice; for they have seen in the writings of many holy and devout authors that special friendships and extraordinary affections vastly injured monks; they think that it is the same with the rest of the world, but there is much to



be said on this point; for admitting that in a well-regulated monastery the common design of all aims at true devotion, it is not there requisite to make these special communications, for fear lest, seeking in particular for what is common, one should pass from particularities to partialities; but as for those who live amongst worldly people, and who embrace true virtue, it is necessary to be bound one to another in a holy and sacred friendship, for by this means they give each other courage, they aid and conduct each other to what is good. And as those who journey across a plain have no need to take each other's hand, whilst those who are on rugged and slippery paths support each other, so as to proceed more safely;<sup>1</sup> so those who are in a monastery have no need of special friendships, whilst those who are in the world have such need, to assure and succour one another amidst so many difficult places which they have to get over. In the world all do not combine for the same end, all have not the same mind; we must, therefore, no doubt, get on separately, and make friendships according to our inclinations; and this particularity really creates a partiality, but a holy partiality, which causes no division save that of the good from the evil, of the sheep from the goats, of the bees from the drones; a necessary separation."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A touch of local colour. François de Sales made several journeys across the Alps; and the pleasure which he took in them is manifest, in various allusions which he makes in his letters to Madame de Chantal, the grandmother of Madame de Sévigné.

<sup>2</sup> "Plusieurs vous diront peut-être, qu'il ne faut avoir aucune sorte de particulière affection et amitié, d'autant que cela occupe le cœur, distrait l'esprit, engendre les envies; mais ils se trompent en leurs conseils; car ils ont vu les écrits de plusieurs saints et dévots auteurs, que les amitiés particulières et les affections extraordinaires nuisaient infiniment aux religieux; ils eurent que c'en soit de même du reste du monde; mais il y a bien à dire: car attendu qu'en un monastère bien réglé le dessein commun de tous tend à la vraie dévotion, il n'est pas requis d'y faire ces particulières communications, de peur que, cherchant en particulier ce qui est commun, on ne passe des particularités aux partialités; mais quant à ceux qui sont entre les mondains, et qui embrassent la vraie vertu, il leur est nécessaire de s'allier les uns aux autres par une sainte et sacrée amitié: car par le moyen d'icelle ils s'animent, ils s'aident et ils s'entreportent au bien. Et comme ceux qui cheminent dans la plaine n'ont pas besoin de se prêter la main; mais ceux qui sont dans des chemins scabreux et glissants s'entretiennent l'un l'autre pour cheminer sûre-

The *Traité sur l'amour de Dieu*, less celebrated than the *Introduction*, is undoubtedly a superior work in the matter of style and arrangement. Our author can also write in an easy and natural vein; and is nowhere more so than in his correspondence with Madame de Chantal, who, won over to a religious life after the death of her husband, founded the order of the Visitandines, and formed an acquaintance with François de Sales, which ripened into an affection of almost passionate warmth.<sup>1</sup> Bossuet is inclined to reproach de Sales with encouraging the ecstatic or hysterical developments of religious feeling; and perhaps the latter's attachment to Madame de Chantal was the issue, if indeed it was not the cause of this tendency. Their letters, his in particular, are the unfettered outpourings of purely emotional souls; and they must be read with a delicate appreciation, such as is due to the confessions of any ardent spirit, let his beliefs or opinions be what they may—be he an Abelard, a de Sales, or a Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Amongst the friends and disciples of François de Sales—for it was impossible that such a man should have been without disciples—the only one whom we need specially mention is Camus, Bishop of Belley.<sup>2</sup> His genius was very eccentric, and has secured for him a certain renown. As a *littérateur* he ought to have been an unfettered satirist and writer of tales, for which his sparkling wit and lively imagination particularly fitted him. As a priest, an eloquent

ment : ainsi ceux qui sont en Religion, n'ont pas besoin des amitiés particulières ; mais ceux qui sont au monde, en ont nécessité, pour s'assurer et se secourir les uns les autres, parmi tant de mauvais passages qu'il leur faut franchir. Au monde, tous ne conspirent pas à une même fin, tous n'ont pas le même esprit : il faut donc, sans doute, se tirer à part, et faire des amitiés selon notre prétention ; et cette particularité fait voirement une partialité, mais une partialité sainte qui ne fait aucune division sinon celle du bien et du mal, des brebis et des chèvres, des abeilles et des frelons, séparation nécessaire."

<sup>1</sup> When he first knew her de Sales was thirty-seven, she only five years younger.

<sup>2</sup> 1582-1655.

preacher, and an inveterate enemy of the begging-friars, he was pure in life and in thought, and sincere in his attacks upon the immorality of the age. In so far as he was able, he combined the gravity of an earnest Christian with the freedom and abandon of an incisive pamphleteer; and he succeeded but indifferently. He could not restrain his eager brain and hand. He is said to have written one hundred and eighty separate works; many of them so lively, so much charged with fiction and extravagance, that de Sales remonstrated with him. The good bishop of Geneva has been blamed for encouraging his friends in their excess of language, which, dangerous even when confined to the expression of religious feeling, becomes doubly so when the boundaries of its licence are extended. But de Sales was scarcely responsible for the vagaries of his friend, Camus, whose own natural bent is amply sufficient to account for his excess, and whose fault he frequently attempted to modify. "When the vine makes too much wood," he told him once, "it is then that it produces least fruit. By burdening the memory we destroy it, as we extinguish lamps when we pour in too much oil, and choke plants by watering them too freely." The bishop of Belley is chiefly interesting to the student of literature by virtue of his attempts to adapt the novel to the language of religion, of which *Palombe* is the best known and most readable. Camus refused several large bishoprics, and finally resigned his own cure, to devote the remainder of his life as the spiritual guide of the poor patients in the Hospital of the Incurables at Paris. The ending of such a life is superior to that of any novel.

## § 2. PASCAL AND THE PORT-ROYALISTS.

Let us advance in our review of the religious philosophy of this age by the interval of a lifetime—from François de Sales, who died in 1622, to Blaise Pascal,<sup>1</sup> born in the following year. We have seen in how far de Sales was beyond the preachers of the League, how their violence, their extravagance, their unmeasured and almost unscrupulous language was sublimed in the elegant amiable eloquence of the Bishop of Geneva. We shall be able to measure now the distance between the ardent proselytisers and ecstatic musers of the time of Henry IV., and the calm, philosophic moralists of the seventeenth century; the thoughtful and moderate minds of Port-Royal.

Pascal was a philosopher in a double sense; for he displayed, from an early age, an almost equal talent in the pursuit of moral and mental science. At the age of sixteen he wrote a Latin treatise on *Conic Sections*, which astonished even the great mathematician Descartes. At the age of nineteen he invented a calculating machine, which, in our time, has been improved and perfected by Babbage. As a young man he studied mathematics with ardour and success; adding, by his independent researches, most valuable confirmation to the discoveries of the master minds of the day—Galileo,<sup>2</sup> Descartes, and Torricelli.<sup>3</sup> His own *Treatise on the Cycloid*, which was published only three years before his death, was written in eight days, amidst great sufferings, and whilst lying on a sick-bed. It is a notable contribution to the mathematical analysis of the infinite. The death of his father<sup>4</sup> left him wealthy but lonely, for one of his sisters was married, and the other, Jacqueline, was in a nunnery. For

<sup>1</sup> 1623-1662.<sup>2</sup> 1564-1642.<sup>3</sup> 1608-1647.<sup>4</sup> 1651.



a short time he moved among people of a certain standing in society. But in 1654 he began to entertain serious thoughts about religion, and whether it was a vision or an accident, as some pretend, which caused this change, he entered the following year into the solitude of Port-Royal des Champs.<sup>1</sup> Here, while the untimely end of his brilliant career was approaching, the more metaphysical questions which have chiefly made him famous seemed to claim the better half of his time and thoughts. There the *Lettres Provinciales* were written and published in 1656; there he undertook to write, in his latter years, a defence of Christianity, and laboured upon it as steadily as his failing strength would permit.<sup>2</sup> Fragments only remain to us, and they were given to the world under the title of *Pensées*, but not until after the author's death. They possess all the characteristics of his clear, forcible, and nervous style, and sufficiently reveal the grandeur of what was to have been his masterpiece. The world lost much by the early death of one who combined in himself the strength of a Locke and a Paley, not to say of a Newton also.

Pascal was, by inheritance and by choice, a Jansenist. Cornelius Jansen<sup>3</sup> was still alive when Pascal was a young man; and the character and opinions of the austere Dutchman, who, in 1617, had been raised to the bishopric of Ypres, but who never lost an opportunity of protesting that the Church of Rome had departed from the ancient discipline and purity of Christianity, had produced a lasting effect upon

<sup>1</sup> Port-Royal des Champs, situated about eighteen miles from Paris, was a Cistercian convent, which, founded in 1240, and having fallen into decay, was revived and reformed in 1608, by Mother Angélique Arnauld, then only seventeen years old. In 1625 the sisters removed to Paris; but a number of religiously inclined men went to live at Port-Royal. This institution was condemned by the Pope in 1709; and the buildings were pulled down, and the tombs desecrated, by the order of Louis XIV., in 1710.

<sup>2</sup> From the age of eighteen, he himself informs us, he never passed a day without pain. He seems indeed to have been sickly from his very birth.

<sup>3</sup> 1585-1638.

the mind of his future apologist. The principal contentions of Jansen, which were maintained with equal persistence by his friend Jean Duvergier,<sup>1</sup> Abbé of Saint Cyran, were that a radical error in Church dogma and economy had been introduced into the Christian faith, that even the Council of Trent had not restored the purity of evangelistic doctrine; that unless the Church returned to the spirit of Augustine, or at least of Saint Bernard, she had no hope but to go on from bad to worse. But the spirit of Augustine, as they interpreted it, was very much the spirit of Calvin; they believed in predestination to eternal bliss and misery, in the hopelessness of those who died unbaptized, in the personal appearance of Antichrist, in the interference of evil spirits in the affairs of the world. With these sombre extravagances of faith, however, they united a gentleness of action and a lofty morality; and they had many followers within the pale of the Church. Amongst these, one of the most famous was the noble Jacqueline Arnauld,<sup>2</sup> better known as the *Mère Angélique*, the abbess of the nunnery of Port-Royal, a personal friend of François de Sales, who had devoted her life to the cultivation, in herself and in others, of an ascetic virtue, and who clung to the possibility of a complete transformation of the human heart, even before death. Inspired by this example, and urged by the application of the Jansenist theories to their everyday life, a number of young men settled in the neighbourhood of Port-Royal, and lived the lives of hermits; foremost amongst them being Antoine Lemaître<sup>3</sup> and Antoine Arnauld,<sup>4</sup> nephew and brother of Angélique, Nicole, Lancelot, and Lemaître de Sacy. Persecution only stimulated the growth of these new opinions; Duvergier was thrown into prison, which he only left on the death of Richelieu, in 1642, whom he survived about ten months. It was in this year that Antoine Arnauld, better known as *le grand Arnauld*, wrote his *Fre-*

<sup>1</sup> 1581-1643.<sup>2</sup> 1591-1661.<sup>3</sup> 1608-1658.<sup>4</sup> 1612-1694.

*quent Communion*, the first work of that scientific school of religious philosophy of which Port-Royal was the focus, and Pascal was to be the principal exponent.

The best claim which the community of Port-Royal has upon our notice is this literary war which it waged against the scholastic theology, and against the Jesuits in particular. The Society of Jesus had ever, to its credit, devoted itself to the education of youth; but whatever danger there was in their general teaching was thus intensified in the eyes of those who distrusted them. Port-Royal determined to meet them on this ground, by establishing schools,<sup>1</sup> and by issuing text-books of their own. The *Grammar*, *Logic*, and *Rhetoric* of Port-Royal—the first by Arnauld, the second by Nicole—were the fruits of their resolve. The Jesuits were not inert in the face of this opposition and defiance. They plotted incessantly at Rome, in order to bring the thunders of the Holy See to bear upon the over-bold Jansenists. The persecution was not without its effect: it induced Blaise Pascal to step into the arena.

Be it observed that Pascal, one of the most independent minds of his age, had never yet up to this point submitted himself to the actual guidance of Jansen, any more than he had frankly accepted the logical consequences of the discoveries of Descartes. He had felt the force of both these powerful influences; but a third feeling had exerted authority over his unwilling mind: he had been swayed by the sceptical influence of Montaigne. Was it not as a sort of refuge from the yawning abyss which had thus threatened to devour him that his staunch and devotional spirit threw him, as by a sudden and irresistible impulse, into the arms of the Jansenists, and made him a recluse at Port-Royal, and its champion against the world?

In 1642, Pope Urban VIII. had launched a bull against

<sup>1</sup> It was at one of these *petites écoles* that Racine received his early training.

the posthumous book *Augustinus* of Jansen. The bull slept ; but shortly afterwards eighty-five French bishops signed a letter to Innocent X., denouncing the principles of the Jansenists, which they summarised in five propositions : that just men could not obey the commandments of God without grace given to them ; that his grace is irresistible ; that man cannot of his own will obey or resist it ; that man has no liberty of action as distinguished from necessity ; that Christ did not die for all men, but only for the predestinated. Fifteen bishops addressed the Pope in support of the Jansenists ; but the result was that Innocent condemned the propositions in 1653. The Jesuits exulted and pressed their victory. Antoine Arnauld, who, by the way, confined himself to an attempt to prove that the propositions were not to be found in the *Augustinus*, was summoned before the Sorbonne, and condemned as a heretic ; though not before the defection from that body of sixty-six dissenting doctors. A decree was moreover obtained from the Government<sup>1</sup> closing the *petites écoles*, and depriving the sisters of Port-Royal of their scholars. It was at this crisis (1656) that the chivalrous soul of Pascal took fire, and brought him to the rescue.

He had no lack of inducements, personal as well as general, to make him identify himself more closely with the community at Port-Royal. He had many intimate friends in the monastery, including his youngest sister. His elder sister, Madame Périer, who has left us a very interesting, though not a very complete life of her brother, draws a vivid picture of the effect produced by his piety upon his family and his friends. "Even my father," she says, "not ashamed to submit to the teaching of his son, embraced from thenceforth"—she is speaking of the year 1647—"a more exact

<sup>1</sup> At this time in the hands of Anne of Austria and Cardinal Mazarin ; who accused the Jansenists of being in league with the chiefs of the Fronde. See *petitum*, Martin, *Histoire de France*.



manner of life, by the continual exercise of virtue until his death, which was in every respect that of a Christian ; and my sister, who had very unusual mental abilities, and who maintained from her childhood a repute which few girls attain, was so touched by my brother's discourses, that she resolved to renounce all the advantages which she had hitherto so greatly cherished, to consecrate herself entirely to God, which she subsequently did, adopting the religious life in a very pious and very austere house"—that of Port-Royal—"where she died in sanctity on the 4th of October 1661, at the age of thirty-six.

The work in which Pascal undertook the revindication of Port-Royal was entitled *Letters from Louis de Montalte to a Friend in the Provinces, and to the Reverend Fathers the Jesuits, concerning the morality and the methods of the said Fathers*.<sup>1</sup> These *Provincial Letters*, as they are usually called, are at once an attack upon the Jesuits and a defence of the Jansenist opinions called in question by the Pope and the Sorbonne ; and their effect was fully as great as the author's most sanguine friends had anticipated. The first letter contains an ironic exaltation of the authority of the Sorbonne, "*mons parturiens*" to end at the invention of the word "next power" "*ridiculus mus*." The second letter is about "sufficient grace, in which there are two things, the sound which is only wind and the thing which it signifies." The third is about the condemnation of Arnauld, in which is the following phrase to be found : "the cleverest men are those who intrigue much, speak little, and do not write at all." In the rest of his letters, from the fourth to the nineteenth and last, he attacks the casuists, who are the Jesuits, by all the means in his power, by raillery, reasoning, passion, eloquence, and logic. All that was good and durable in the doctrine of Port-

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis, et aux RR. PP. Jésuites sur la morale et la politique de ces pères.*

Royal—and this was much—became incalculably stronger by Pascal's championship, which was, in fact, almost sufficient in itself to decide the great battle for supremacy between Gallican and what we now understand by ultramontane views in the French Catholic church, and to decide this battle in a sense adverse to the Jesuits. Not, of course, definitely at the first blow; although the victory of the *Provincial Letters* was rapid and brilliant, and the reverse of the Jesuits was logically and confessedly crushing. But the work of Pascal was immortal. He was not able to see its full results, for it has been in each successive generation, down to the present century, that his clear, severe, and convincing philosophy has reaped its triumphs. As for his literary method, the opinion of M. Victor Cousin<sup>1</sup> must necessarily be the opinion of all who read and weigh his works.

We shall give two passages from the *Provinciales*. In the first, Pascal defends truth against falsehood and intrigue:—

“That war in which violence attempts to oppress truth is peculiar and of long duration; all the efforts of violence cannot weaken truth, and only serve to enhance it the more. All the light of truth cannot do anything to stop violence, and only irritate it more. When force combats, force the most powerful destroys the least powerful; when we oppose speeches against speeches, those which are true and convincing confound and dispel those which are nothing but vanity and falsehood; but violence and truth cannot act reciprocally upon one another. Nevertheless, let us not conclude from this that these things are equal: for there is this very great difference, that violence has only a limited range by command of God, who causes its effects to be

<sup>1</sup> In a report made by him to the Academy, wherein he recommended and prepared the way for the first complete edition of the *Pensées* from the original manuscript, he says:—“The speciality of Pascal is rigour, that inflexible rigour which aims, in everything, at the utmost precision, the last degree of exactness. Hence the clear and luminous style, the firm and decided manner, overlaid alternately by the charm of a most amiable naïveté, and by the sublime melancholy of a soul which very soon wearied of the world.”

conducive to the glory of the truth which it attacks ; whilst truth exists to all eternity, and finally triumphs over its enemies, because it is eternal and powerful as God itself.”<sup>1</sup>

The next passage is a most eloquent diatribe, in which we hear Pascal's indignation vibrate and break forth in defence of the nuns of Port-Royal.

“Cruel and cowardly persecutors, are the most retired cloisters not even refuges against your slanders ? Whilst these holy virgins worship Jesus Christ day and night in the holy sacrament, according to their rule, you cease neither day or night to publish that they do not believe that He is in the Eucharist, nor even seated at the right hand of His Father, and you cut them off publicly from the Church whilst they pray in secret for you and for the whole Church. You slander those who have no ears to hear you, nor mouth to answer you ; but Jesus Christ, in whom they are hidden in order to appear one day only with Him, hears you and answers for them. We hear this day this holy and terrible voice which astonishes nature and consoles the Church ; and I fear that those who harden their hearts and who refuse obstinately to listen to Him when He speaks as a God, shall be compelled to listen to Him with terror when He shall speak to them as a judge.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C'est une étrange et longue guerre que celle où la violence essaye d'opprimer la vérité ; tous les efforts de la violence ne peuvent affaiblir la vérité, et ne servent qu'à la relever davantage. Toutes les lumières de la vérité ne peuvent rien pour arrêter la violence, et ne font que l'irriter encore plus. Quand la force combat la force, la plus puissante détruit la moindre ; quand on oppose les discours aux discours, ceux qui sont véritables et convaincants confondent et dissipent ceux qui n'ont que la vanité et le mensonge ; mais la violence et la vérité ne peuvent rien l'une sur l'autre. Qu'on ne prétende pas de là néanmoins que les choses soient égales ; car il y a cette extrême différence, que la violence n'a qu'un cours borné par l'ordre de Dieu, qui en conduit les effets à la gloire de la vérité qu'elle attaque ; au lieu que la vérité subsiste éternellement, et triomphe enfin de ses ennemis, parce qu'elle est éternelle et puissante comme Dieu même.—(Twelfth *Provinciale*.)

<sup>2</sup> Cruels et lâches persécuteurs, faut-il donc que les cloîtres les plus retirés ne soient pas des asiles contre vos calomnies ? Pendant que ces saintes vierges adorent nuit et jour Jésus-Christ au saint-sacrement, selon leur institution, vous ne cessez nuit et jour de publier qu'elles ne croient pas qu'il soit

Let us content ourselves with a single brief extract from the posthumous volume of his *Thoughts*, published by the bereaved friends of the thinker, with this apt and laconic inscription : *Pendent interrupta.*

"Let man regard the universe of nature in its full and lofty majesty ; let him carry his sight far beyond the petty objects which surround him ; let him behold that brilliant light set like an eternal lamp to enlighten the universe ; let the world seem to him as a point in comparison with the vast orbit which the sun describes,<sup>1</sup> and let him think with wonder that this vast orbit itself is but an insignificant point compared with that which is embraced by the stars revolving in the firmament. But if our sight is here arrested, let the imagination pass beyond ; it will weary of its conceptions before nature wearies of her facts. The whole visible world is an imperceptible spot in the ample bosom of nature. No idea can approach it. In vain do we expand our conceptions beyond imaginable space ; we produce but atoms in comparison with the reality of things. It is an infinite sphere, whose centre is everywhere, its circumference nowhere."<sup>2</sup> This, in short, is the most intelligible evidence of the omnipotence of God, that our imagination should be lost in such a thought. Returning to himself, let man consider what he is in comparison with what is ; let him regard himself as lost in this remote cor-

ni dans l'eucharistie, ni même à la droite de son Père, et vous les retranchez publiquement de l'Eglise pendant qu'elles prient dans le secret pour vous et pour toute l'Eglise. Vous calomniez celles qui n'ont point d'oreilles pour vous ouïr, ni de bouche pour vous répondre ; mais Jesus Christ en qui elles sont enchaînées, pour ne paraître qu'un jour avec lui, vous écoute et répond pour elles. On l'entend aujourd'hui cette voix sainte et terrible qui étonne la nature et qui console l'Eglise ; et je crains que ceux qui endureissent leurs cœurs et qui refusent avec opiniâtreté de l'entendre quand il parle en Dieu, ne soient forcés de l'ouïr avec effroi quand il leur parlera en juge."

<sup>1</sup> Again he is remembered that Pascal had not accepted, if at this time he had heard of the conclusions of Galileo.

<sup>2</sup> According to Vincent de Beauvais (1190-1264) in his *Speculum Historiale*, Empedocles had said : *Deus est sphaera, cujus centrum ubique, circumscriptio nusquam.* Rabelais (*Pantagruel*, book iii. ch. 13) and Mademoiselle de Gournay, the adopted daughter of Montaigne, ascribe this definition to Hermes Trismegistus.



ner of nature, and in this petty prison wherein he is confined—I mean the universe—let him learn to value the earth, kingdoms, cities, himself, at their due worth.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Que l’homme contemple donc la nature entière dans sa haute et pleine majesté ; qu’il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l’environnent ; qu’il regarde cette éclatante lumière mise comme une lampe éternelle pour éclairer l’univers ; que la terre lui paraisse comme un point, au prix du vaste tour que cet astre décrit, et qu’il s’étonne de ce que ce vaste tour lui-même n’est qu’un point très-délicat, à l’égard de celui que les astres qui roulent dans le firmament embrassent. Mais si notre vue s’arrête là, que l’imagination passe outre : elle se lassera plus tôt de concevoir que la nature de fournir. Tout ce monde visible n’est qu’un trait imperceptible dans l’ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n’en approche. Nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions au delà des espaces imaginables, nous n’enfantons que des atomes, au prix de la réalité des choses. C’est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part. Enfin, c’est le plus grand caractère sensible de la toute-puissance de Dieu, que notre imagination se perde dans cette pensée. Que l’homme, étant revenu à soi, considère ce qu’il est au prix de ce qui est ; qu’il se regarde comme égaré dans ce canton détourné de la nature, et que, de ce petit cachot où il se trouve logé, j’entends l’univers, il apprenne à estimer la terre, les royaumes, les villes et soi-même son juste prix.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## § 1. THE FRONDE.

A REMARKABLE fact stands out in the social and literary history of the seventeenth century, which, in its very first decade, introduces an epoch of refinement and luxury, the natural issue of the Renaissance, and all the more splendid for its late appearance. The long civil wars had disorganised society in France from the top to the bottom. With many conspicuous exceptions, the courts of Henry IV. and Louis XIII. were as dissolute as any which succeeded them. Apart from open or concealed licentiousness of life, the nation had received a moral twist from its religious bitterness, which displayed itself as much in politics and diplomacy as in literature and social life. The examples of the highest classes produced their natural effect upon the lower; or rather the same causes produced a simultaneous effect, under different conditions, upon every section of the community. Prominent amongst the leaders of fashionable vice and recklessness of conduct, with their inseparable concomitant in the case of the least cultivated classes—coarseness of manners, were women so highly placed, and so necessarily influential, as Catherine de Medici, Mary de Medici, and, most dissolute of the three, Marguerite de Valois. It was impossible that the example of these three queens should not have given a powerful impulse to the moral degradation of Frenchmen; and it was a strange compensation of fate, not

in itself unnatural, that a countrywoman of two of the three, Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet, should be the instrument whereby a partial regeneration of society was to be effected.

This regeneration is a remarkable fact; but its significance would not be fully discerned if we failed to notice the deep colours wherein is drawn the contrast between the luxury and splendour of the society of which the hôtel de Rambouillet was the centre, and the terrible excess of misery in which the lower orders of Frenchmen, especially at the time of the Fronde, were simultaneously plunged. No pencil could be too graphic to paint this curse of France, the legacy of the League, from which, aggravated as it was by a long series of extortionate taxations, the unhappy country never entirely recovered until the days of the Revolution. From the very commencement of the seventeenth century the records of wide-spread ruin, of penury and famine, of wretchedness and its attendant crime, are heartrending in the extreme; and the exasperation of all these evils which, towards the middle of the same century, created the outbreak of the Fronde, and raised up such examples of heroic self-devotion as Saint Vincent de Paul, produced a phenomenon the ghastliness of which is not surpassed in the annals of any other country. The works of contemporary French artists—of Callot and his fellow-engravers in particular—present the most vivid and painful idea of the condition to which France, at its weakest, was reduced. “Even<sup>1</sup> in his own country Callot had had frequent instances of the revolutions of fortune which resulted in a life of Bohemianism: several noblemen in Lorraine had come to beg at the knees of Saint Vincent de Paul’s missionaries; their wives and daughters bartered their honour for a piece of bread, if the alms were too long in reaching them. Misery had already

<sup>1</sup> Alphonse Feillet, *La Misère au temps de la Fronde*, ch. i.

given them the vices which she too often carries with her; victims of violence and injustice, they will in their turn make others submit to them. Seeing their hollow looks, the exhausted frames of the women, the children dying of hunger, very phantoms in human garb, we are no longer astonished to find plunder organised amongst them." It would be an endless task, and fortunately for our present purpose it is an unnecessary one, to wade through the sickening details of this national misery.

The product of this desperate condition of the country was the wars of the Fronde, an insurrection of the Parliaments and the Third-Estate, which began in Paris and spread rapidly through the country, involving in its progress a considerable section of the French nobility. Antetype of the Revolution of 1789, with which in its earlier stages it had much in common,<sup>1</sup> both as regards its causes and its processes, it has attracted the closest attention of subsequent historians, and is not without its direct bearing upon the history of French literature. Hardly any district in France, especially in the northern, eastern, and southern provinces, was free from this insurrectionary Nemesis, the spawn of civil war. The great cities throughout the land rose one after another, declaring for a cause which they might have found it difficult to define; whilst the queen, her court and her counsellors, barricaded themselves in the capital which they had only strategically and for a short time abandoned. All this overturning of the social fabric could not but find its reflection in the literature of the day; and in fact it found it, more than once, in a sufficiently curious and even ridiculous

<sup>1</sup> The flight from Paris of Anne of Austria and her two children (January 6, 1649), the seizing of the Bastille, the command of the military forces in the city by citizen-officers, the impeachment of Mazarin, the adhesion to the Parliamentary party of men like the Prince de Conti and the Duke de Laiguette, are amongst the features of what might be made to appear a striking historical parallel.



manner. Pamphlets and engravings, issued principally in Paris, enable us to see with wonderful clearness the shadow cast by this portentous outbreak of long-smothered passions upon the mind of the generation. The prints and squibs of this period, known under the generic name of *Mazarinades*, form in themselves an intellectual history, tolerably complete, of the Fronde, and more particularly of the Fronde as it was seen and experienced in Paris. One engraving represents the Fronde as a vessel in which are the best-known leaders of the insurrectionary movement; in the sea are Mazarin and his friends, checking the course of the ship with contrary winds, and on the other side Marshal d'Ancre, an anchor in his hands, with which he is endeavouring to sink "the Fronde." The engraving appeared early in the year 1648, whilst the queen and her court were at Saint Germain; and above it is this device: "The safety of France in the arms of Paris." The inevitable spirit of satire extends to the pamphlets; and, in default of satire, buffoonery. One of them, written by a captain of militia, not yet, it may be supposed, having received his baptism of fire, selects the motto of the League: "One God, one faith, one king, one law;" and he indulges in braggadocio of this kind: "We have given orders to all our soldiers to carry boots, so that the blood of those whom we are about to kill (which will run in streams), may not get into our shoes." A graver tone is of course not lacking here and there, "O sweet war!" cries one, "O fine war for the scoundrel and the pickpocket! O sad war for the citizen shut up like a prisoner in his city! O rude war for the shopkeeper met with in the open country! and above all, O cruel war for the oxen, cows and sheep, for more than six leagues round."<sup>1</sup> Valuable contributions to the secret history of the time are to be found in the letters of Mère Angélique, of Port-Royal; in the *Recueil* of the advocate

<sup>1</sup> 1621-1689.

Lehault,<sup>1</sup> and in many other letters, journals, and official documents of the period, which have been at various times brought to light.

It is against such a background that we have to examine the condition of high society and polite literature in Paris, during the first half of the seventeenth century. With this undercurrent of misery in our minds we must make acquaintance with the luxurious assemblies of the hôtel de Rambouillet, and the refined intercourse of the *précieux* and *précieuses*.

## § 2. THE HÔTEL DE RAMBOUILLET.

Bright indeed is the contrast when we turn from the melancholy annals of the Fronde, and of the troubles which gave rise to it, to the pure, if unnatural life and character of Catherine de Vivonne,<sup>2</sup> the young and noble-minded wife of the Marquis de Rambouillet. The daughter of an Italian mother, married at a very early age, and brought suddenly amidst the gaiety and the license of the court of Henry IV., a mother before she was twenty, her mind speedily recoiled from the gilded hollowness of a society which had so few charms for her. She retired, about the year 1608, to her husband's private house, and was at once sought out by admirers as distinguished as Malherbe and Racan. It is probable that before this time the latter's *Bergeries*, d'Urfé's *Astrée*, and the other works of the pastoral school, had produced a lasting effect upon her impressible mind; and she may have conceived the idea of creating in the midst of the gay capital an oasis of romance such as these poems and stories had taught her to covet. And as she felt her influence

<sup>1</sup> Alphonse Feillet, *La Misère au temps de la Fronde*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1588-1665.

increase, and saw that the best literary men, the purest and most refined women, preferred her house to the salons of the king and the cardinal, she doubtless became fired with the ambition of holding her court in perpetuity. Such *réunions* as the marquise held night after night, first in her husband's old hôtel, and subsequently in a grand and elegant furnished mansion for which she herself had supplied the design,<sup>1</sup> were very rare, if not hitherto unknown in Parisian society. Be that as it may, we must regard Madame de Rambouillet as the pioneer of her countrywomen in the fashion of elegant entertainments, which became, a little later, one of the most characteristic features of Parisian life, and which has been specially immortalised in the plays of Molière.

The influence of woman on literature was to be henceforth one of the great constraining powers in France; and it has been almost always, as it was beyond question in this instance, a power exerted for good. The democracy of letters profited immeasurably by the happy idea which made Catherine de Vivonne the cynosure of literary Parisians. "At the hôtel de Rambouillet all men of wit were received, whatever may have been their social status; all that was asked of them was that they should be well-mannered; but the aristocratic tone was established there without effort, most of the guests being very grand lords, and the mistress being at once a Rambouillet and a Vivonne." Arthénice—as Malherbe transposed the letters of her name—was in reality a queen, more powerful in the sway which she loved to exercise over her subject than either Mary de Medicis or Anne of Austria. This sway, moreover, was light and easy; her courtiers were all like-minded with herself, all anxious to maintain the dignity and glory of the reign under which they lived, and all obedient to the nod of the monarch—or

<sup>1</sup> In 1613; see V. Cousin, *Madame de Sablé*, 1854, p. 53.

rather, as she was habitually called, the goddess whom they served.

Amongst the earliest favourites of the marquise, in addition to Malherbe and Racan, was Cospeau<sup>1</sup>, who had been Richelieu's tutor, a grave and eloquent preacher, well advanced in years, like the two poets, but not on this account less acceptable to his young and discriminating hostess. After these came Chapelain,<sup>2</sup> the future author of *La Pucelle*; a subject which might well create an epic poet in a nation whose literary genius was not wholly inapt for the epic vein, but which, like Ronsard's *La Franciade*, proved a dreary failure; though Chapelain was a good scholar, and as a critic deserves more of his country by his judgment of others than by the fruits of his own commerce with the muses; Gombauld,<sup>3</sup> the author of a poem called *Endymion*, in which he was supposed to have depicted his love for the queen; the Italian Marini,<sup>4</sup> who wrote *Adonis*, dedicated to Louis XIII., to which Chapelain prefixed a laudatory introduction; Voiture;<sup>5</sup> Conrart;<sup>6</sup> Godeau,<sup>7</sup> who for his diminutive size was called "Julie's Dwarf," and who, through the favour of the marquise, was afterwards promoted to a bishopric; the diminutive Marquis du Vigean; the Marshal de Souvré,<sup>8</sup> and his daughter, the well-known Marquise de Sablé;<sup>9</sup> the Duke<sup>10</sup> and Duchess de la Trimouille;<sup>11</sup> and the young bishop of Luçon, afterwards the Cardinal de Richelieu.<sup>12</sup> Amongst the ladies came Madame Aubry; a friend and correspondent of Voiture's, Mademoiselle Paulet; these two endowed with excellent voices, with which they were wont to add to the charms of the hôtel de Rambouillet; Madame Saintot; the princess de Montmorency;<sup>13</sup> and Anne de Bourbon,<sup>14</sup> afterwards the

<sup>1</sup> 1568-1646.<sup>2</sup> 1595-1674.<sup>3</sup> 1570-1666.<sup>4</sup> 1569-1625.<sup>5</sup> 1598-1648.<sup>6</sup> 1603-1675.<sup>7</sup> 1605-1672.<sup>8</sup> 1542-1626.<sup>9</sup> 1598-1678.<sup>10</sup> 1620-1672.<sup>11</sup> The Duchess was a Princess Amelia of Hesse Cassel.<sup>12</sup> 1584-1642<sup>13</sup> 1594-1650.<sup>14</sup> 1619-1679.



Duchess de Longueville. The daughters of the marquise, again, contributed in no small degree to the pleasure of their mother's guests, and the eldest of them, Julie d'Angennes,<sup>1</sup> was destined to succeed to her mother's honours and influence.

The elegance of the hôtel de Rambouillet, the refinement of its hosts and guests, were enhanced by the kindness, the good humour, and the gaiety of all who lived in and frequented it. Endless are the anecdotes narrated by Voiture, by the Marquis de Rambouillet, and others of the *habitues* of the hotel, who have left us in their letters and journals a record of all that passed before their eyes. The mutual affection and devotion of the household itself are especially touching. On one occasion the second son of the marquise was attacked by the plague. She sent the servants away, and tended the boy herself, alone with him until his death, save for her eldest daughter, whom she could not induce to leave her. It was Julie also who nursed the Duchess de Longueville through the small-pox, when all her other friends had fled in terror. The pretty archness and practical joking of this society of friends was as kindly in its intention as it was always gracefully endured. The Count de Guiche,<sup>2</sup> afterwards Duke de Gramont, seems to have been a favourite butt. On his first introduction by M. de Chaudebonne he was entertained by the marquise, who knew his epicurean taste, with a spare and altogether uneatable repast; but his thorough breeding and good humour under the infliction was rewarded by the most *recherché* of suppers, the cooking of which had been timed about half-an-hour after that of the other. The mistress of the house in which was found so much genuine purity and virtue, so much wit and gaiety, so much kindness and refinement, deserves the character given of her in his *Historiettes* by Tallemant des Réaux,<sup>3</sup> whose pen spares few

<sup>1</sup> 1607-1671.<sup>2</sup> 1604-1678.<sup>3</sup> 1619-1692.

of those whom it takes upon itself to describe. "Madame de Rambouillet," says this gossip-monger of the seventeenth century, "was admirable; she was good, gentle, beneficent, modest, warm-hearted, of a noble spirit; she it was who corrected the evil manners then in vogue."

Mademoiselle de Rambouillet was married to the Marquis de Montausier,<sup>1</sup> who left Paris when the troubles of the Fronde began to thicken within and without the city. Her mother was then in feeble health; and the brilliant circle was for a time overshadowed. The civil war concluded, Madame de Montausier returned, and once more the glories of the hôtel de Rambouillet revived. But the first charm had departed, or, at all events, it was changed for a charm more artificial, and the refinement which had attracted all Paris began to give place to an affectation at which almost all Paris laughed. It was only towards the close of Madame de Rambouillet's life that her school of manners and of literature deserved the name of *précieuse*. Molière, who slew it with his ridicule, was well able to discriminate between the diamond and the paste. In the preface of his *Précieuses Ridicules*, he says, after humourously complaining that his play was being printed in too great a hurry: "I cannot so much as obtain the liberty of speaking two words to justify my intention as to the subject of this comedy: I would willingly have shown that it is confined throughout within the bounds of allowable and decent satire, that things the most excellent are liable to be mimicked by wretched apes, who deserve to be ridiculed; that these absurd imitations of what is most perfect have been at all times the subject of comedy . . . the true *précieuses* would be in the wrong to be angry when the pretentious ones are exposed who imitate them awkwardly." It was not Madame de Rambouillet and her daughter, nor such as their later adherents,

<sup>1</sup> 1610-1690.

as Mademoiselle de Scudéry,<sup>1</sup> and Madame de Sévigné,<sup>2</sup> whom the great satirist desired to ridicule in the characters of Madelon and Cathos, but only the glib dealers in an easily affected phraseology, who turned the purism of Malherbe, Racan, and Voiture, into a ridiculous jargon, just as the imitators of the English purists, who misconceived and abused the really dignified style of Lyly, gave birth to the nonsensical euphuism which Sir Walter Scott has embalmed in Sir Piercie Shafton.

Julie de Montausier, was a favourite retailer of romances, in a vein which drew its wealth from the stories of d'Urfé;<sup>3</sup> and Voiture, who loved to listen to her, gives us a charming specimen in his *Alcidalis et Zelide*, the idea of which he took from her mouth. But the great romancist of the set was Mademoiselle de Scudéry, whose novels supplied the later *précieuses* with their art of love, their code of manners and sentiments. *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Clelie* are conceived in the full flavour of the spirit which governed the hôtel de Rambouillet before its earlier glories had faded; their principal merit consists in the speaking likenesses which they draw of the leading spirits in this assembly of wits. The last of the ten long-winded volumes of *Clelie* appeared in the year of the Marquise de Rambouillet's death; the date of the first volume is 1654; that is, it covers the latest and least wholesome phase of the *coterie*. It is in the first portion of the work that the map of the country of Tenderness is introduced.

According to this love-chart there are in the country of Tenderness three rivers—Inclination, Esteem, and Gratitude. If any one wishes to go from the town New Friendship to the city of Tenderness, near the river Esteem, he has to tra-

<sup>1</sup> 1607-1701.

<sup>2</sup> 1626-1696.

<sup>3</sup> It is true that Roederer, in his exhaustive *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de la société polie*, 1835, considers that *Astrée* was not in favour with the marquise and her friends; though his reasons are indirect, and certainly not conclusive.

verse the villages Great Wit, Charming Verse, Love-Letters, Sincerity, Noble Heart, and many more with similar names. But if the traveller loses his way and strays to the village Negligence, he will fall into the lake of Indifference ; and if he strays to the left, he may, after having gone through the villages of Indiscretion, Perfidy, Pride, Slander, and Wickedness, be finally drowned in the sea of Enmity. This is no unfair example of the manner and treatment of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's romances. The spirit which had ended in such a perversion of taste and common sense had long ago completed its useful task, but at last it stood self-condemned, and the iconoclast was at hand to do for the affectations of Paris what Cervantes had done for those of Madrid. "I was present," says Ménage,<sup>1</sup> "at the first representation of *les Précieuses Ridicules* (1659) at the Theatre du Petit Bourbon. Madame de Rambouillet was there, also M. Chapelain, and almost all the hôtel de Rambouillet. The piece was played amidst general applause, and I was satisfied with it on my own part, as I saw the effect which it was going to produce. In leaving the theatre I took M. Chapelain by the hand, and said to him, 'You and I approve this folly which has just been criticised so cleverly and with such good sense, but, believe me, to use the words of St. Remi to Clovis, We must burn what we have adored, and adore what we have burned.' It has happened as I predicted, and from that first representation we have turned back from fustian and swollen style."

We must not omit to mention what may perhaps be considered as the best literary outcome of the hôtel de Rambouillet, apart, of course, from the letters and memoirs in which its history is recorded. The *Guirlande de Julie*<sup>2</sup> con-

<sup>1</sup> 1603-1692.

<sup>2</sup> See *Poètes de Ruelles au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle : La Guirlande de Julie*, ed. Octave Uzanne, which contains a complete history of this Garland.



sisted of an album of verses, composed in honour of Julie d'Angennes, at the instance of the Marquis de Montausier, during the weary years of his protracted courtship. Even after the presentation of the *Guirlande* (1641) he had to wait four years more, and married at last his beloved Julie (1645) when she was thirty-eight years old, and after he had abjured the Protestant religion to become a Roman Catholic. On each page of the album was painted a flower, with one or more madrigals inscribed beneath it. The devoted lover himself wrote sixteen; Voiture and Racan are conspicuous by their absence.<sup>1</sup> The poems were engrossed by a noted calligrapher, Nicolas Jarry, who produced three copies in the year of its first appearance. Of the copy presented to the lady herself the first three leaves were blank, the fourth held the title, the fifth was illustrated by a painted garland of flowers, the sixth was blank, the seventh contained a medallion representing Zephyr surrounded by a mist, holding in his right hand a rose and in his left a garland of flowers. Upon the eighth page was the florid dedication of the work by its gallant instigator, under the title "Zephyr to Julie."  
 "Madrigal:—

"Receive, O adorable nymph,  
 From whom our hearts receive their laws,  
 This more enduring crown  
 Than that which we place upon the head of kings.  
 The flowers from which my hand has woven it  
 Outshine the golden flowers seen in the sky;  
 The water wherewith Parnassus bathes them  
 Gives them an everlasting freshness;  
 And every day my fair Flora,

<sup>1</sup> The other writers were Arnauld d'Andilly, father and son, de Corbeville, de Briotte, Chapelain, Colletet, Corneille, Desmarets, Godeau, Gombauld, Habert de Montmort, Habert de Cérisy, a third Habert, *commissaire* in the artillery, Malleville, Martin de Pinchesne, Scudéry, Tallemant des Réaux, and the Marquis of Rambouillet.

Who loves me and whom I adore,  
 Angrily reproaches me,  
 That my sighs never for her  
 Produce a flower so beautiful  
 As I have produced for you." <sup>1</sup>

*Julie's Garland*, as we have said, was not contributed to by Racan and Voiture, although these were amongst the most habitual frequenters of the hôtel de Rambouillet. Why the first did not write some poetical compliment is not known, but the second was probably excluded by jealousy, both on his own part and on that of the Marquis de Montausier. The "great letter-writer," as he was generally called, took, however, later his revenge, by addressing numerous letters and verses to Mademoiselle de Rambouillet.<sup>2</sup> It would seem, too, that Voiture's manners were not so invariably polished as to save him from the criticism of his more refined associates; at all events he was a man who had started in life with less advantage in this respect than the majority of them. Tallemant des Réaux, one of the circle, and who was called the *calomniographe* of his age, relates how M. de Chaudelbonne, happening to meet Voiture at the house of a mutual friend, said to him,

<sup>1</sup> "Recevez, ô nymphe adorable,  
 Dont les cœurs reçoivent les loix,  
 Cette couronne plus durable  
 Que celle que l'on met sur la tête des roys.  
 Les fleurs dont ma main la compose  
 Font honte à ces fleurs d'or qu'on voit au firmament.  
 L'eau dont Parmesse les arrose  
 Leur donne une fraîcheur qui dure incessamment;  
 Et tous les jours ma belle Flore,  
 Qui me chérit et que j'adore,  
 Me reproche avecque courroux  
 Que mes soupirs jamais pour elle  
 N'ont fait naistre de fleur si belle  
 Que j'en ai fait naistre pour vous."

<sup>2</sup> "Quand les dieux eurent fait Minerve qui la vit  
 Le chef d'œuvre parfait En pleura de dépit,  
 Que *Julie* on appelle, Et se trouva moins belle."

"Sir, you are too polished a man to remain in the bourgeoisie ; I must withdraw you from it." It was some time after this before the clever but blunt and indiscreet man was received at the Marquise de Rambouillet's assemblies. There he was rude more or less to Julie d'Angennes, to Mademoiselle Paulet, and to several others, until he was at last in sufficiently bad odour all round. His companions composed for him a sort of round-robin of satire, in which he was somewhat hardly used, and which has been preserved by Tallemant des Réaux in his *New Collection of the Finest Poems*.<sup>1</sup> Voiture complains, not very bitterly, of this *jeu d'esprit* in a letter to his friend Costar.<sup>2</sup> "I send you," he says, "some verses which have been made against me, in which Voiture is rhymed with *roture*. . . . I have a good mind to show this precious poem to M. Chapelain."

Two ladies of the court of Madame de Rambouillet, who had both been the pupils of Chapelain and Ménage, and who have both left behind them works of considerable literary merit, deserve to be specially noticed here, although they lived far into the reign of Louis XIV. ; Madame de Sévigné,<sup>3</sup> grand-daughter of Madame de Chantal, formerly mentioned,<sup>4</sup> and Madame de la Fayette.<sup>5</sup> Left a widow at the age of twenty-five, Madame de Sévigné devoted herself simultaneously to the care of her children and to intellectual pursuits. The evidences of her wit, her sprightly criticism, her learning, and her literary appreciation, are preserved in a

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1659.  
 "Je voudrais bien rimer en *ture*,  
 Pour descrire Monsieur de Voiture . .  
 Quoiqu'il ait fort peu de lecture,  
 C'est un vray diable en escriture,  
 En vers, prose et littérature ;  
 C'est un Alexandre en peinture ;

C'est un Démosthène en sculpture,  
 Un Caton en architecture . . .  
 Du Cercle il sait la quadrature . .  
 C'est une aimable créature,  
 Si sa race estoit sans rature  
 Et sa naissance sans *roture*."

<sup>2</sup> *Les Entretiens de M. de Voiture et de M. de Costar*, Paris, 1654, p. 460.  
 Chapelain was another *roturier*.

<sup>3</sup> 1626-1696.

<sup>4</sup> See bk. iv. ch. 6; p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> 1634-1693.

number of very entertaining letters. Almost all of them are well written, lively, and gossipy, and those to her married daughter, Madame de Grignan, bear proof of great critical acumen and a rather over-motherly affection. They have been much read and esteemed in each succeeding generation. The force of her talent may be gauged by a single expression in one of these letters, where she recommends the reading of serious books. "It gives," she says, "a sombre hue to the mind, to lack pleasure in solid reading." Let us take a larger specimen of the style and manner of these sparkling little sallies, in which, to use her own words, she suffers her pen "to amble with the reins upon its neck."

"I am about to make you acquainted with a circumstance the most astonishing, the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most triumphant, the most astounding, the most unheard of, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unforeseen, the most grand, the most petty, the most rare, the most commonplace, the most notorious, the most secret up to the present moment, the most brilliant, the most enviable ; in short a circumstance of which but one example is to be found in past ages, an example, however, which is not precisely the same ; a circumstance which we could not believe in Paris, so how could they believe it at Lyons ? a circumstance which makes all the world cry out, ' wonderful ! ' a circumstance which fills Madame de Rohan and Madame de Hauterive with joy ; a circumstance, in short, which will take place on Sunday, at which those who look on will fancy they are subject to a hallucination, a circumstance which will take place on Sunday, and which will perhaps not take place on Monday. I can't make up my mind to tell it : guess what it is. I give you three tries : do you give it up ? Well ! I must tell you then. M. de Lauzun marries on Sunday, at the Louvre, guess whom ? I give you ten tries : I give you a hundred. Madame de Coulanges says : It is very hard to guess ; it is Mademoiselle de la Vallière ? By no means, Madame. Then it is Mademoiselle de Retz ! Not at all, you are very countryfied. Verily, say you, we are vastly



stupid ; it must be Mademoiselle de Créquy. You have not got it ; then to make an end of it, I must tell you. He marries, with the King's permission, Mademoiselle . . . Mademoiselle de . . . Mademoiselle. . . . Guess the name ; he marries Mademoiselle ; my word, upon my word, my sacred word, Mademoiselle, the great Mademoiselle ; Mademoiselle, daughter of Monsieur deceased ; Mademoiselle, grand-daughter of Henry IV. ; Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orleans,<sup>1</sup> Mademoiselle cousin-german of the King, Mademoiselle, destined for a throne, Mademoiselle, the only match in France which could be worthy of that gentleman."<sup>2</sup>

Madame de la Vergne, Countess de la Fayette, whom Rochefoucauld describes as "the most genuine person in the world," was eight years younger than Madame de Sévigné, and was only twenty-one at the death of Madame de Rambouillet. Her first work was printed five years before the latter's death, under the title of *The Princess de Montpensier*. Her chief talent was in romantic biography, and she left behind her two books containing the ripest fruit of her well-trained and judicious mind, *History of Henrietta of England*, and *Memoirs*

<sup>1</sup> All these were the titles of Mademoiselle de Montpensier (1627-1693), daughter of Gaston of Orléans, generally called "Monsieur," younger brother of Louis XIII. She did not marry Lauzun (1633-1723) then (1669), but probably about ten years later, and secretly. In order to obtain Louis XIV.'s permission and the freedom of her lover, who had been ten years imprisoned, she had to abandon to the Duke of Maine, one of the legitimised bastards of the king, the county of Eu, the duchy of Aumale, and the principality of Dombes.

<sup>2</sup> "Je m'en vais vous mander la chose la plus étonnante, la plus surprenante, la plus merveilleuse, la plus miraculeuse, la plus triomphante, la plus étourdissante, la plus inouïe, la plus singulière, la plus extraordinaire, la plus incroyable, la plus imprévue, la plus grande, la plus petite, la plus rare, la plus commune, la plus éclatante, la plus secrète jusqu'aujourd'hui, la plus brillante, la plus digne d'envie ; enfin, une chose dont on ne trouve qu'un exemple dans les siècles passés, encore cet exemple n'est-il pas juste : une chose que nous ne saurions croire à Paris, comment la pourrait-on croire à Lyon ? une chose qui fait crier miséricorde à tout le monde, une chose qui comble de joie M<sup>me</sup> de Rohan et M<sup>me</sup> de Hauterive ; une chose enfin, qui se fera dimanche, où ceux qui la verront croiront avoir la berlue ; une chose qui

of the Court of France during the years 1688 and 1689. In the meantime she had published *Zayde*, a Spanish tale, and *The Princess of Cleves*, the story of an honest married woman in love with another man than her husband ; both short novels told in a charming, delicate, and attractive manner. Though her style is correct, and even sometimes eloquent, and though she writes carefully and precisely of what she has seen, it is not easy to assent to the eulogy which Boileau passes upon her when he calls her "the woman of all France who had the most wit and who wrote the best."

### § 3. LITERARY COTERIES.

After the death of Madame de Rambouillet the sway of fashion and letters in France may be said to have been transferred to Mademoiselle de Scudéry, whose "Saturday Receptions" almost rivalled the brightest assemblies of Arthénice. But affectation reigned supreme in the house of the authoress of *Clélie*. All who frequented it had assumed names chosen

se fera dimanche, et qui ne sera peut-être pas faite lundi ; je ne puis me résoudre à la dire, devinez-la, je vous le donne en trois : jetez-vous votre langue aux chiens ? Hé bien ! il faut donc vous la dire, M. de Lauzun épouse, dimanche, au Louvre, devinez qui ? Je vous le donne en dix ; je vous le donne en cent. Mue de Coulanges dit : Voilà qui est bien difficile à deviner ; c'est Mlle de La Vallière. Point du tout, madame. C'est donc Mlle de Retz ? Point du tout, vous êtes bien provinciale. Vraiment, nous sommes bien bêtes, dites-vous : c'est assurément Mlle de Créquy. Vous n'y êtes pas : il faut donc à la fin vous le dire. Il épouse, avec la permission du Roi, mademoiselle . . . mademoiselle de . . . mademoiselle . . . devinez le nom ; il épouse Mademoiselle ; ma foi, par ma foi, ma foi jurée, Mademoiselle, la grande Mademoiselle ; Mademoiselle, fille de feu Monsieur ; Mademoiselle, petite-fille de Henri IV. ; Mademoiselle d'En, Mademoiselle de Bombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, Mademoiselle cousine-germaine du Roi, Mademoiselle destinée au trône, Mademoiselle, le seul parti de France qui fût digne de Monsieur."

for the most-part from the romances of the day. The hostess herself was known as Sappho, Sarasin<sup>1</sup> was Polyandre, Conrart was Théodamas, Pellisson<sup>2</sup> was Acanthe, or *le Chroniqueur*, because he was charged with immortalising the annals of the *coterie*. Ysarn<sup>3</sup> was Zénocrate, Godeau, who at the hôtel de Rambouillet had been "Julie's dwarf," was here dignified under the name of the Magus of Sidon, or the Magus of Tendre. The wit of these *réunions* was often very sparkling and well sustained; but if the spirit or invention of the company failed, they had a ready resource in the dressing of two dolls, the great and the little Pandora, who governed with inexorable authority the fashions of elegant Paris. An account of one of these evenings, the 20th December 1653, represents the inhabitants of the *pays du Tendre* at their best. Conrart had brought for Mademoiselle de Scudéry a crystal seal, accompanied by a madrigal; and with little delay the mistress of the house produced the following reply:—

"To merit such a pretty seal,  
 So well cut, so bright, so polished,  
 Methinks we ought to possess  
 Some pretty secret together;  
 For indeed pretty seals  
 Demand pretty secrets,  
 Or at least pretty notes;  
 But as I know not how to make these,  
 As I have nought whereon to be secret,  
 Or worthy of such a mystery,  
 I must simply tell you  
 That you make presents so gallantly

<sup>1</sup> 1605-1654.

<sup>2</sup> 1624-1693. Pellisson was a faithful friend of Fouquet, became from a Protestant a Roman Catholic, took orders, obtained rich benefices, and was called the king's *convertisseur*.

<sup>3</sup> 1637-1673. He is the author of *The Speaking Pistole*.

That one cannot refuse  
To give you one's heart, or suffer it to be taken."<sup>1</sup>

The effect of the impromptu was instantaneous; the whole evening afterwards was consumed in the production of madrigals, which exist to this day, and which bear witness to the affectation of literary cultivation among the degenerate *précieux* and *précieuses* of the seventeenth century. In her old age Mademoiselle was visited by an Englishman, Dr. Martin Lister,<sup>2</sup> who says of her: "Among the persons of distinction and fame, I was desirous to see Mademoiselle de Scudéry, now 91 years of age. Her mind is yet vigorous, though her body is in ruins. I confess this visit was a perfect mortification, to see the sad decays of nature in a woman once so famous. To hear her talk, with her lips hanging about a toothless mouth, and not to be able to command her words from flying about at random, puts me in mind of the sibyl's uttering oracles. . . . In her closet she showed me an original of Madame Maintenon, her old friend and acquaintance, which she affirmed was very like her; and indeed she was then very beautiful."

It was an age of literary extravagance, as well as of great

<p>" Pour mériter un cachet si joli, Si bien gravé, si brillant, si poli, Il faudrait avoir, ce me semble, Quelque joli secret ensemble; Car enfin les jolis cachets Demandent de jolis secrets, Ou du moins de jolis billets;</p>	<p>Mais comme je n'en sais point faire, Que je n'ai rien qu'il faille taire, Ou qui mérite aucun mystère, Il faut vous dire seulement Que vous donnez si galamment Qu'on ne peut se défendre De vous donner son cœur ou de le laisser prendre."</p>
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Polite gallantry might very safely proceed to this length in the *pays du Tendre*. Mademoiselle had already said to Pellisson—

" Enfin, Acanthe, il faut se rendre;  
Votre esprit a charmé le mien:  
Je vous fais citoyen de *Tendre*  
Mais, de grâce, n'en dites rien."

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Martin's Lister's *A Journey to Paris in the year 1698*.



culture—an extravagance in more than one or two aspects, when every day produced some ridiculous epigrams, anagrams, *bouts-rimés*,<sup>1</sup> monorimes, protean verses, and a dozen other ingenious trifles of Ménage and his less known friends, amongst whom Commire, Boivin, Faydit, may be simply named before we pass on. The *bouts-rimés* are, however, sufficiently in vogue, even in our own days, to induce us to quote an account of their origin. “One day,” Ménage tells us, “Dulot was complaining, in the company of several persons, that he had been robbed of some papers, and in particular of three hundred sonnets which he regretted more than all the rest. Some one having betrayed surprise that he had made so many, he replied that they were blank sonnets, that is to say, the ending rhymes of all the sonnets which he had de-

<sup>1</sup> Many examples of these ingenuities may be found in the *Curiosités littéraires* of M. Lalanne. We give a specimen of these *bouts-rimés* “On the death of a cat,” of which all the end-words are names of countries or towns:—

“ Aimable Iris, honneur de la	<i>Bourgogne,</i>
Vous pleurez votre chat, plus que nous	<i>Philipsbourg ;</i>
Et fussiez-vous, je pense, au fond de la	<i>Gascogne,</i>
On entendrait de là vos cris jusqu’à	<i>Fribourg ;</i>
Sa peau fut à vos yeux fourrure de	<i>Pologne,</i>
On eût chassé pour lui Titi du	<i>Luxembourg.</i>
Il ferait l’ornement d’un couvent de	<i>Cologne,</i>
Mais quoi ! l’on vous l’a pris ? l’on a bien pris	<i>Strasbourg !</i>
D’aller pour une perte, Iris, comme la	<i>Siennie,</i>
Se percer sottement la gorge d’une	<i>Vienne,</i>
Il faudrait que l’on eût la cervelle à l’	<i>Anvers.</i>
Chez moi, le plus beau chat, je vous le dis, ma	<i>Bonne,</i>
Vaut moins que ne vaudrait une orange à	<i>Narbonne,</i>
Et qu’un verre commun ne se vend à	<i>Nevers.”</i>

“Philipsbourg” was a strongly fortified town in the grand-duchy of Baden, taken from the French in 1635 and 1675; “Strasbourg” was through secret negotiations given up to Louis XIV. in 1681; “Siennie” is the French for Sienna, a town in Italy; it means here “his;” “Vienne” is a town in Dauphiné, and has here the meaning of “sword,” so called from being made in the city of Vienne; “Anvers” is Antwerp, but is here used for *à l’envers*, topsy-turvy; Bonne was an abbey in Provence, in the diocese of Senez; oranges are plentiful at Narbonne; and common glass was made at Nevers.

sired to fill in. This sounded odd, and thenceforth men began to do, for a kind of sport, when in company, what Dulot did by himself." Sarasin ridiculed this idea in four songs, under the title of *Dulot vaincu, ou la défaite des bouts-rimés*, which certainly discouraged the fashion. Hédelin, Abbé d'Aubignac,<sup>1</sup> author of a *History of the Time, or Record of the Kingdom of Coquetry, taken from the last voyage of the Dutch to the Indies of the Levant*, which was no doubt in part an imitation of the peculiar genre of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and which excited the latter's jealousy, formed a *coterie* at his own house, for which, being patronised by the Dauphin, he endeavoured to obtain the title of Royal Academy; but his wish was fortunately not granted. Another abbé of the same age, Cotin,<sup>2</sup> was a man of some spirit, and of a certain grandeur and dignity in the making of verses. He published in 1634 *Jerusalem in desolation, or Meditations on the lessons of darkness*; and subsequently essays on *Philosophy*, on the *Immortal soul*, *Christian poems*, a *Paraphrase on the Song of Solomon*, as well as a collection of *Enigmas* and *Rondeaux*. He too had a quarrel with Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and with all her school, against whom he wrote bitter things in his *Oeuvres Galantes*. Ménage took up the cudgels for his friends, and, on the occasion of a madrigal addressed by Cotin to the lady,<sup>3</sup> the sexagenarian scholar lampooned the abbé in a Latin epigram, whereupon the other collected all the verses he had launched against Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and dedicated the book to her. Cotin decidedly had the best of the war of words: Ménage was constrained to let him alone.

<sup>1</sup> 1604-1676.<sup>2</sup> 1604-1682.<sup>3</sup> The offending madrigal was as follows:—

"Pour un mal d'oreille.

"Suivre le Muse est une erreur bien lourde;  
 De ses faveurs voyez le fruit;  
 Les escrits de Sapho menerent tant de bruit  
 Que cette Nymphe en devint sourde."

The abbé, too, had powerful friends who came to his assistance ; Gilles Boileau, the brother of the poet—who treated the poor abbé almost worse than Molière did, because Cotin had first spoken lightly of Boileau's poems—Lemaître, and others. On the production of *les Précieuses Ridicules* he thought that the greatest dramatist of the age would assist him in demolishing *Ménage*. Molière let him expect his revenge ; all the town came to see the two wranglers photographed on the stage in the *Femmes Savantes* ; but when it came to the point, *Ménage*, under the name of Vadius, was let off so cheaply, and Cotin, under the name of Trissotin, was so sorely handled, that the poor abbé could hardly lift up his head again. That satire dogged the clerical satirist to his grave.

#### § 4. SATIRISTS OF THE PERIOD.

One kind of extravagance leads to, or at least accompanies many others ; and the extravagance of literary manner was soon matched, in the seventeenth century, by the extravagance of literary license. The courts of Henry IV. and Louis XIII. were, as we have seen, not such as could attract a man of scrupulous morality, or a woman of purity and refinement. The hôtel de Rambouillet had indeed served as a sort of refuge for the courtiers of both sexes who chose to give to the royal assemblies no more of their time than strict etiquette demanded ; and it is on this account, because the centre of the literary society of the age was the centre of its morality, that Madame de Rambouillet deserves the warmest recognition of the student of literature. On the other hand, the courts of the monarchs were not without their literary men, who, if they were extravagant in their licentiousness, were free from much of the affectation which mars their more

soberly conducted rivals. The best of them was Théophile de Viau,<sup>1</sup> a poet of great ease and brilliancy, the Coryphaeus of a band of young and well-born courtiers who defied all attempts to set bounds to the indulgence of their appetites. It was not the company of the hôtel de Rambouillet from which Théophile had to expect, or actually received, his bitterest opposition. The same authorities which had persecuted Villon and Marot turned their formidable weapons against him; and though the times had changed in the interval, he was as nearly burned at the stake as any man could then be for an offence mainly literary. As it was, his effigy was burned on the Place de Grève; he was imprisoned, and rescued only by the powerful friends whom he had made at court—Liancourt, Montmorency, and others. Naturally the accusation against him was in part religious, in part moral; but it was argued in his defence that he had abjured Protestantism, and that he had translated Plato's *Phædo*, thereby testifying to his belief in the immortality of the soul. Such a rebuttal alone would have done him little service against the exasperation of his enemies, amongst whom it is painful to have to mention the elegant and learned Guez de Balzac,<sup>2</sup> a friend of his youth, and a staid brother-litterateur. Théophile fled to England, came back, was caught, and thrown into the same dungeon where Ravaillac, the murderer of Henry IV., had been immured. There he remained for two years, and was at last perpetually banished from France. This sentence was not strictly carried out, for he died at Paris, a year later, at the youthful age of thirty-six.

Théophile's poetry is before all things vivid and highly coloured. His figures force attention; they startle—unfortunately they sometimes make us laugh. What, for instance, could be more ridiculous than this?—

<sup>1</sup> 1590-1626.

<sup>2</sup> 1594-1655.



“ Here the whitening rocks,  
 Groaning under the shock of the waves,  
 Lift up their horned bulks  
 Against the anger of the elements,  
 And oppose their bare heads  
 To the lightning's threat.”<sup>1</sup>

And what, again, more absurd than these lines, quoted by Boileau from his *Pyramus and Thisbe*, a drama which he wrote when very young, which had a great success in its time, but is now scarcely known?—

“ Ah! here is the dagger which has been basely polluted.  
 With the blood of its master! It blushes at it, the traitor.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet, this same poet, when writing to the king and asking him permission to return to France, could express such manly sentiments, as are to be found in the following verses :—

“ He who hurls the thunder,  
 Who governs the elements,  
 And moves with earthquakes  
 The great mass of the earth ;  
 God, who placed the sceptre into your hands,  
 Who can take it away from you to-morrow,  
 He, who lends you the light of his countenance,  
 And who, in spite of the fleurs-de-lis,  
 Shall one day make dust  
 Of your buried limbs.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Ici des rochers blanchissants                    Contre la colère des airs  
 Du choc des vagues gémissants                Et présentent leurs testes nues  
 Hérissent leurs masses cornues                À la menace des esclairs.”

<sup>2</sup> “ Ah! voicy le poignard qui du sang de son maistre  
 S'est souillé laschement ! Il en rougit, le traistre.”

*Act V. scene 2.*

“ Celui qui lance le tonnerre,	Qui vous le peut ôter demain,
Qui gouverne les éléments,	Lui qui vous prête sa lumière,
Et meut avec des tremblements	Et qui, malgré les fleurs-de-lis,
La grande masse de la terre ;	Un jour fera de la poussière
Dieu qui vous mitle sceptre en main	De vos membres ensevelis.”

Théophile did not see nature, as the courtly poets of his time depicted it, trimmed and cut and clipped, festooned and made fit to be presented to high-born lords and ladies, but he saw it as it really exists. Witness the following lines:—

“In this solitary and sombre valley  
 The stag bells at the murmuring water,  
 And casting his eyes in the brook,  
 Delights in looking at his shadow.  
 A cold and gloomy silence  
 Reigns beneath the shade of these boughs,  
 And the winds lash the elms  
 With amorous violence. . .  
 I shall see these verdant woods,  
 Where our isles and the fresh grass,  
 Serve the bellowing flocks  
 As a walk and as a manger.  
 When Aurora returns there it finds (grown again)  
 The grass, which they have eaten during the day.  
 I shall see the water which quenches their thirst,  
 And I shall hear the plaint of the gravel,  
 And the murmuring of the stream’s echo,  
 Amidst the insults of the mariners.  
 I shall gather these apricots,  
 These flame-coloured strawberries . . .  
 And these figs and melons,  
 Whereof the north winds  
 Have never yet kissed the rinds,  
 And these yellow darling grapes,  
 Which are never injured by hail,  
 Sheltered by our rocks.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Dans ce val solitaire et sombre  
 Le cerf qui brame au bruit de l’eau,  
 Penchant ses yeux dans le ruisseau,  
 S’amuse à regarder son ombre.  
 Un froid et ténébreux silence  
 Dort à l’ombre de ces rameaux,  
 Et les vents battent les ormeaux  
 D’une amoureuse violence . . .  
 Je verrai ces bois verdissants

Où nos îles et l’herbe fraîche  
 Servent aux troupeaux mugissants  
 Et de promenoir et de crèche.  
 L’aurore y trouve à son retour  
 L’herbe qu’ils ont mangée le jour ;  
 Je verrai l’eau qui les abreuve,  
 Et j’orrai plaindre les graviers  
 Et résonner l’écho du fleuve  
 Aux injures des mariniérs

One drama was probably enough for Théophile to write.<sup>1</sup> He saw that it was not his line, and forsook it with an apology. "Formerly," he says in one of his short poems, "when my verses contributed to the animation of the stage, the constraint I was in gave me much trouble ; the wearisome work made a martyr of me for some time, but at last, thank the gods, I am quit of it. . . . Rules displease me, I write at random ; a good wit does nothing except at its ease." He turned again to his odes, elegies, epigrams, satires, and epistles in verse and in prose, which prose is concise, nervous, clear, and superior to his poetry.

After extravagance and eccentricity, satire follows as a matter of course. We have seen something of it in the person of the Abbé Cotin, but a greater than he was behind : a satirist of seventeenth-century life in general, of licentiousness and literary affectation in particular. *The True Comical History of Francion*, by Charles Sorel,<sup>2</sup> Sieur de Souvigny, appeared first in 1622, and made a great sensation. It was not long in running through sixty editions, being occasionally enlarged and reinforced by new allusions and illustrations. Its first title was *The Comie History of Francion, a Scourge of the Vicious*, and its authorship was veiled under the assumed name of Nicolas de Moulinet ; and in his *Bibliothèque Gauloise*, published in 1664, a sort of *catalogue raisonné*, Sorel denies having written it. No doubt our author had the troubled lot of

Je cueillerai ces abricots,  
Ces fraises à couleur de flammes. . .  
Et ces figues et ces melons  
Dont la bouche des aquilons

N'a jamais su baiser l'écorce,  
Et ces jaunes muscats si chers  
Que jamais la grêle ne force  
Dans l'asile de nos rochers."

<sup>1</sup> A tragedy, *Pasiphaé*, has been wrongly attributed to him. It is said that he also assisted Sorel, Saint Amant, Du Vivier, and Boisrobert, in the composition of a ballet, *The Bacchanals*.

<sup>2</sup> 1602-1674. It may be mentioned here that Sorel was the author of a duodecimo pamphlet, *de l'Académie française, établie pour la correction et l'embellissement du Langage, et si elle est de quelque utilité au public*, 1654. Sorel answers his question by a decided negative.

Théophile de Viau before his eyes, and therefore resolutely maintained his incognito; for there is no question that he can at times surpass his contemporary in abandonment of mood, getting even beyond the *Parnasse satirique*, although he claims the excuse of adopting this tone simply as a "scourge of vice," and in order to make sin appear hideous.

Sorel was distinctly a comic romancist, and he hits the school of d'Urfé tolerably hard in the *Extravagant Shepherd*.<sup>1</sup> But it was in the *Francion* that he launched his satires with most effect and most comprehensively. Guez de Balzac, under the character of the pedant Hortensius; Boisrobert,<sup>2</sup> the buffoon-confidant of Richelieu, whose vocation it was to keep the court of Louis XIII. in perpetual good humour; Racan, who figures as Saluste; Gaston d'Orléans as Clérante, and a dozen besides, either under their own names or thinly disguised, come in for a touch of the satirist's lash. *Francion*, the hero, is a kind of Don Juan, who passes through numerous adventures, nearly all leading out of or up to the vagaries of some woman. As the narrative in the edition before us<sup>3</sup> fills five hundred and thirty-nine closely-printed pages, and

<sup>1</sup> Guy-Patin, who agrees with Ménage and Tallemant des Réaux in positively assigning the *Francion* to Sorel, ascribes to him, in addition, the *Baron extravagant*, *Opéra de Chypriote*, and a *Philosophie Universelle*; and he goes on to say: "He has still more than twenty volumes to write, and he would be glad if he could do it before dying, but he cannot persuade the printers. He is very delicate, and I have often seen him ill. Yet he lives comfortably, because he is very sober. He is a man of much common sense, and taciturn; neither a bigot nor a Mazarin."

<sup>2</sup> 1592-1652. He produced a farce called the *Three Oranges*, founded on a story which Tallemant des Réaux records him as having retold for the amusement of his patron Richelieu. It was the well-known account of the hoax played on Mademoiselle de Gournay, the adopted daughter of Montaigne, and the author of *Oranges*. Four and odd, she was anticipating the honour of a visit from Rosan, when two practical jokers conceived the idea of visiting her, one after the other, in the character of the expected guest. When the real Rosan came, of course the unfortunate old lady was already rejected, and his reception was hardly as pleasant as it might have been.

<sup>3</sup> The edition of M. Colomby, Paris, Delaunay, 1558.



would make at least six of the volumes in which our modern novels usually appear, and as it has no plot or link of any kind running through it, the reader will spare us an analysis. In return we will recommend this romance to his attention, as a work of superior literary merit, and as having the further advantage of being as interesting as *Roderick Random*, and the disadvantage of being even coarser.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## § 1. RICHELIEU AND HIS WORK.

It is time that we should turn our attention more particularly upon the central historical figure of the age whose literary annals we have been tracing; upon the man who dealt French feudalism a blow from which it never recovered, who raised France to the strongest and proudest position amongst the nations of Europe, who made the French king a Sultan, not to say a Grand Lama, and the Government of France an autocracy, a centralised despotism, a vampire fattening upon the blood of the nation; who, to be just, produced order and peace from chaos, delaying for a century and a half the cataclysm in which monarchy and aristocracy were to be overwhelmed; who, himself an author, patronised letters and arts, founded the Academy, and emphasised by his death the close of the later Renaissance—Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal Richelieu.<sup>1</sup>

The death of Henry the Fourth<sup>2</sup> left France a prey to dissolute and impotent self-seekers, who could ruin their country, but who could not govern it. Mary de Medici, the Queen-Mother, on whom devolved the regency of France and the charge of the infant king, chose for her counsellors the most worthless and unscrupulous favourites, with whom none more worthy could possibly associate themselves. Concino Concini and Leonora Galigai, afterwards his wife, a couple of Florentine adventurers, who had come to France in the train

<sup>1</sup> 1585-1642.<sup>2</sup> 1610.

of the Queen-Mother, d'Epemon, the Pope's Nuncio, and the Spanish ambassador, were the counsellors from whom she chose to borrow her policy. As for the young Louis, he was kept carefully in the background, cultivating those tastes and accomplishments which were the chief glory of this royal huntsman, confectioner, market-gardener, falconer, gunmaker, of whom it was well said that "he had a hundred valet's qualities and not one quality of a master." The truly great policy of Henry IV., for the prosecution of which he and Sully had raised vast sums of money, was thrown on one side; and it is said that upwards of forty million livres were spent in buying the acquiescence or silence of all who showed a tendency to be troublesome. Yet, amongst the more patriotic Frenchmen of the day, a demand arose for the convocation of the States-General, which the queen and her minions could not resist. In 1614, accordingly, the nobility, clergy, and the Third-Estate met in Paris, where, after much talk, a desperate quarrel between the clergy and the Third-Estate, and a good deal of abject flattery of the court by the first two orders, they were dismissed in the following year, never to assemble again until the eighteenth century was drawing to a close. Amongst the clergy who represented the Church in this memorable assembly were the Cardinals de Joyeuse and Duperron, Bishop Camus, and, selected as the spokesman of his order, Richelieu, then Bishop of Luçon.

Richelieu had not been intended for the Church, but the bishopric was a family appanage, and his elder brother preferring the monastery to the cathedral, Armand Jean, by this time a soldier, was converted into a clerical dignitary. It is said that for four years he devoted eight hours daily to the study of theology, and thus undermined a constitution never very robust. At the age of twenty-two he went to Rome to be instituted to his see, and being under the canonical age, he first antedated his birth by the necessary interval,

and then, the consecration over, prayed the Pope for absolution.<sup>1</sup> It is a picture of the man, as wily as he was resolute, as unscrupulous in means as he was ambitious in his aim. At the meeting of the States-General he was one of the most abject flatterers of Mary de Medici, and even paid court to Leonora Concini, whose husband had been created Marshal d'Ancre, the consequence being that when the Parliament was dissolved Richelieu remained in Paris as a counsellor of state. Not long afterwards he became almoner to the young Queen Anne, the wife of Louis XIII., was employed on delicate missions by the Queen-Mother, and was appointed minister of foreign affairs and war.

A glorious future was insured to France from the moment when Richelieu became the pilot of her fortunes. He adopted forthwith the policy sketched out by Henry IV., and lived to render his country greater services than Henry himself could have rendered under similar circumstances. Consider for a moment what were the actual achievements of Richelieu as a statesman. He brought to an end the long and disastrous religious wars which had devastated France, not by mere good fortune, but by humbling one after another all the brave leaders of the Protestant cause, and displaying in the siege and capture of Rochelle a military talent of no mean order; he conciliated his foes by securing religious toleration throughout France; he created the French navy; he humbled England, destroying the force which the despicable Buckingham had brought to the relief of the Protestants; he abased Austria and Savoy, thoroughly defeating the latter in the field; he conquered Lorraine, overran Alsace, enabled Portugal to cast off her allegiance to Spain, and seized Catalonia from the crumbling empire of Philip's weaker successors. Finally, he concluded advantageous treaties with England, Sweden,

<sup>1</sup> This has been contradicted; but Vittorio Siri, in his *Memorie recollections*, says so, and mentions that the Pope observed: "The young bishop is endued with rare genius, but he is subtle and crafty."



Russia, Belgium, and Holland. Side by side with these triumphs he overcame a thousand personal enemies, smiting them in detail ; now a conspiracy of the Court, of his fellow-counsellors, of Monsieur, the Queen-Mother, the Queen, the king himself ; now the rebellion of a province or country ; now the slanders or threats of those whom he had injured, or who envied his power. This one man, in short, was the life and soul of the France over which Louis le Grand was to wield the sceptre through seventy brilliant and memorable years ; this was the statesman who destroyed the power of the barons<sup>1</sup> and the Third-Estate, who made the government of France a mere bureaucracy, depending always on the wisdom of its chief minister. This man it was who taught royalty its one indispensable art of drawing a vast revenue from a struggling and starving population. This, too, was the man who, amidst all his triumphs and fame, valued before everything the repute of a man of letters, who sat at the feet of Madame de Rambouillet, who pointed and accentuated the later classical Renaissance, whereof he was the outcome, the exponent, the glory, and, let us not forget to add, the despot.

The death of Richelieu is an epoch which must not be allowed to pass without notice. It took place at the close of 1642, in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and barely five months before that of the king. "On the third of December,"<sup>2</sup> in the afternoon, the king came to see the cardinal for the last time. The doctors, having given up all hope, had abandoned the sick man to some quacks, who procured him a little relief, but his weakness increased. On the morning of the fourth, perceiving the approach of death, he desired his niece, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, to retire—"the person," accord-

<sup>1</sup> In 1626 Richelieu issued an ordinance for the destruction of the fortifications of towns and castles not being of service in the protection of the frontiers.

<sup>2</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xi. p. 577. To this work I owe a great deal of this chapter.

ing to his own words, 'whom he had most loved.' It was the only moment, not of weakness but of tenderness, that he had had ; his immovable firmness was not belied during all his long sufferings. All the bystanders, ministers, generals, relatives, and domestics, had melted into tears ; for this terrible man was, by the confession of contemporaries the least favourable to him, 'the best master, relative, and friend that ever existed.' Towards noon he heaved a deep sigh, then a feebler one, then his body sank down and remained immovable—his great soul had departed."

As a patron of literature and a *littérateur* Richelieu deserves attention. It was during his first reverse at court in the year 1618, when the assassination of d'Ancre led to the temporary disgrace of the queen-mother and of himself, that he wrote at Avignon his earliest brochure. It was a *Defence of the Chief Points of the Catholic Faith against the Letter of four* (Protestant) *Ministers of Charente*. The pamphlet is crude and bitter enough in style ; but it is distinguished by a warm plea for toleration in matters of religion, and, in fact, makes it a charge against the Calvinists that they would refuse liberty of conscience. A second and more important work, written in the same year, and which has passed through as many as thirty editions, was the *Instruction of a Christian*. But a more characteristic, perhaps a better work than either of these was his tragi-comedy *Mirame*, the reputed produce of his riper leisure, after many years' intercourse in the drawing-rooms of Paris with all that they included of refinement and learning, and in which he certainly had a hand, if he did not wholly write it. He built a theatre at the Palais Cardinal expressly for the production of his drama, expending upon it a sum of not less than two hundred thousand crowns, whereon followed success in the usual order of things. Fontenelle<sup>1</sup> informs us that "the applause given to

<sup>1</sup> 1657-1757.

the play, or rather to him who was known to be so deeply interested in it, so transported the Cardinal that at one time he stood up and leaned out of his box, to show himself to the company ; at another time he made a sign for silence, in order that still finer passages might be heard with effect." A Frenchman all over, he coveted the triumph of the intellect.

The literary productions of Richelieu were by no means the mere scintillations of his leisure moments, or the biddings for fame of a vain and sumptuous *dilettante*. The Cardinal was by nature bent a man of studious and refined spirit ; and great as his labours were, great as were his anxieties and temptations, he was throughout his life a regular and industrious author. According to one of his biographers he would usually go to bed about midnight, sleep for three hours, wake and write from three o'clock to six, and sleep for a couple of hours again. The man who can adhere to such a division of his time as this, may indeed shorten his life, but he will be able to produce much in the course of a dozen or twenty years. Richelieu did both. If he had lived, he might have been regent of France during the minority of Louis XIV. He died before his king, but his voluminous literary remains—to leave out of sight his still more voluminous state-papers—continued his fame and his usefulness beyond his death. His *Memoirs*, which he himself called a *History of Louis XIII.* form a copious and very serviceable storehouse of facts and elucidations for historians of the time.<sup>1</sup> This detailed narrative ends at the year 1638, with the birth of Louis XIV. Possibly the Cardinal had begun to experience the cost of his heavy labours ; for he complains of "indispositions, and the burden of affairs," and wished to husband his

<sup>1</sup> M. Henri Martin, in his *Histoire de France*, vol. xi. p. 490, bears willing testimony to their value, and says, "We cannot part without regret from this vast work, when, thanks to it, we have long lived on familiar terms with so lofty a mood of thought. The abundance of detail at first fatigues us, but a persevering attention is amply repaid."

strength for the yet grander future which he saw before him. From this point to the close of his life he wrote a succinct *Narrative of the Great Deeds of the King*—a title appropriate in all save the last word. Another work, much wider in scope and distinguished by many statesmanlike inferences and generalisations, the *Political Testament*, has commonly been ascribed to Richelieu.<sup>1</sup>

Let us hasten from Richelieu's literary works to the considerably higher claim which he has upon our notice as a patron of literature. Not, indeed, that he invariably commands our esteem and gratitude in this aspect, for with much generosity<sup>2</sup> and liberal discernment, he undoubtedly played the autocrat in his part of Mæcenas more than was either wise or acceptable to literary men. On the whole, however, he was a munificent and steadfast protector and encourager of literature, and the drama was the branch which he particularly patronised. Himself an amateur playwright, not content with having, in a great measure, produced an entire play, he composed the plots of a dozen more, leaving them to be filled in by one or other of his numerous clients or pensioners. We cannot but admire the sense and moral courage of this cardinal-patron of the stage, who, defending the comedians before the king, declared that "so long as they conducted the proceedings of the theatres so as to keep them free from impurity and wantonness, the exercise of their calling ought not to be held as cause of blame to them, nor to prejudice their reputation." On the other hand, Richelieu claimed to lay down the laws

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire declined to accept it as the work of the Cardinal, even after the first chapter had been found revised and corrected in Richelieu's own handwriting. The balance of evidence would seem to favour the assertion of Montesquieu, that the *Testament* was written under the eyes and by the direction of Richelieu, in much the same manner as the *Memoirs* of Sully.

<sup>2</sup> It is said that Richelieu spent four million francs a year. Much of this was no doubt expended for the public good; and as M. Martin justly says, "the pensions which he bestowed on a crowd of soldiers, diplomatists, literary men and artists, were genuine national rewards."



of the stage, and he intervened with some degree of arbitrary power in the hot dispute which was waged amongst dramatists and literary men after the death of Hardy, and when the company of comedians at the hôtel de Bourgogne were just about beginning to play the productions of Corneille. He imposed upon the *Comédiens du Roi* the unities of the Greek drama, and thus did more than the most rigid of Parisian pedants would have done to perpetuate the severest exaggerations of classical form, and to out-Aristotle Aristotle.

One of Richelieu's greatest works, after all, was the definite establishment of the Academy. The virtual origin of the French Academy was a club for the study of French grammar and orthography, formed in the house of Baïf, a disciple of the Pléiade, of which Charles IX. became "protector" in 1570; granting it at the same time, in spite of the opposition of Parliament and University, formal letters patent. The death of Baïf, and the disturbed condition of the country, interrupted the history of what might have been, without cavil, the nucleus of the existing Academy; but the idea had crystallised; and it reappeared in 1612, in a pamphlet of David Rivault: *A Plan for an Academy, and for the Introduction of the same in the Court*.<sup>1</sup> It was not apparently until 1630 that the actual society to which Richelieu accorded his protection was formed; Valentin Conrart, one of the king's secretaries, then followed the precedent of Baïf by assembling in his house a club of scholars and literary men: Godeau, Gombault, Chapelain, Giry, Habert, Sérizay, the Abbé de Cérisy, and Malleville. After these came Faret, Desmarest, and the Abbé de Boisrobert; and it was through the latter that Richelieu, in 1634, offered to give the society the recognition of the State, and to constitute it as a public body. Sérizay, Malleville, and others were for rejecting the

<sup>1</sup> See on the whole subject *Curiosités littéraires* by Ludovic Lalanne; p. 272 et seq.

offer ; but it was nevertheless “unanimously resolved to accede to the pleasure of his Eminence.” The result was the incorporation of the Académie Française, which had previously been styled the Academy of Wits, the Academy of Eloquence, and the Eminent Academy. The society remodelled its statutes, and declared grandiosely that, “It seemed that nought was wanting to the happiness of the kingdom but to take this language which we speak out of the list of barbarous tongues . . . that our language, already more perfect than any other living language, might at length fairly succeed to the Latin, as the Latin had to the Greek, if more care for elocution were taken than hitherto ; that the functions of the academicians should be to purify the language from the defilements which it had contracted, whether in the mouths of the people, or in the crowds of the law-courts and the impurities of chicanery, or by the evil habits of ignorant courtiers, or by the abuse of those who corrupt it in writing, and of those who say well what they have to say in the lecture rooms, but inexactly.”<sup>1</sup>

The Academy had to pay for its incorporation ; but not so much as it was willing to pay. In the articles which it had drawn up for the king’s signature it pledged its members “to revere the virtue and the memory of Monseigneur their protector.” Richelieu struck out this piece of sycophancy ; but he permitted a number of court-officials—Séguier, Montmort, du Chastelet, Bautin, and Servien—to foist themselves on the list of academicians, they having raised obstacles to the confirmation of the charter for this very purpose. Nevertheless it took another two years and a half to secure the necessary registration of the document by the Parliament of Paris, which was clearly jealous and apprehensive of the power

<sup>1</sup> Lalanne, *ibid.* p. 275. Epigrams were at once showered upon the new foundation ; one asserting, *à propos* of the above declaration, that Richelieu had given to the members two thousand *livres* apiece out of the eighty thousand voted for cleaning Paris of its filth.

sought to be vested in the Academy; and this sanction was only accorded, after three peremptory decrees and a good deal of stern insistence, on condition that a new clause should be added to the statutes, to the effect that "the members of the said assembly and academy shall take cognisance of nothing except the adornment, embellishment, and augmentation of the French language, and of books which shall be produced by them, and by other persons who shall desire and will it." The lawyers, it is said, were of opinion that, without this clause, the Academy would have been able to inflict a penalty on them if their briefs were not drawn up according to rule. It is well to note upon how high a level, since the days of Ronsard and Malherbe, these disputes of grammar and rhetoric had come to be waged.

We have seen how Richelieu applied (the word is elastic) to the Academy to condemn the *Cid* of Corneille, which his Eminence had somehow failed to reconcile with Aristotle. This condemnation was drawn up by Chapelain, and was corrected and annotated by the Cardinal himself. Whatever may be thought of this first important judgment under the new order of things, it is impossible to acquit the Academy in its early days of subserviency. The king and the cardinal had, indeed, made it too fashionable; the great lords and courtiers were eager to join its ranks, and favour did more for the candidates than their intellectual deserts. One anecdote may serve as well as fifty, although it is an instance of the opposition, occasionally successful, raised by the best of the academicians against the prostitution of their unquestionably high vocation. Conrart, the originator of the Academy, such as Richelieu found it, being dead, an ignorant great nobleman desired to fill his place. Whereupon Patin—the originator of the now obligatory speech in honour of the member deceased—observed to his colleagues: "An ancient Greek had a lyre, whereof one string was broken.

Instead of replacing it with gut he chose a silver cord ; and the lyre lost its tune." The hint sufficed for that occasion, but it was soon forgotten.

No doubt many of the first academicians were well worthy of their seats. Maynard, Voiture, Vaugelas, l'Etoile, Balzac, Saint-Amant, Racan, Godeau, Chapelain, Conrart, are names which would adorn the books of any society of literary men.<sup>1</sup> In 1638 the Academy resolved upon compiling a dictionary of the French language, and Chapelain and Vaugelas submitted plans for it. That of the first-named was selected, and a list of authors was drawn up from whom the examples were to be taken.<sup>2</sup> To Vaugelas,<sup>3</sup> a Savoyard by birth, and a man of great judgment and refinement, was entrusted the care of editing this important work. The first edition did not appear until 1694, four years after that of Furetière already mentioned. Subsequent editions were printed in 1718, 1740, 1762, 1813, 1835, and one which is now in course of publication, begun in 1858, and of which the second

<sup>1</sup> The number of *fouteuils* was forty from the beginning. Lalande, in the work already cited, gives a complete table of their successive occupants, wherefrom we will copy one. Original member, Fr. Maynard ; 1647, P. Corneille ; 1685, T. Corneille ; 1710, De la Motte ; 1731, Bussy-Rabutin ; 1737, Fonceagné ; 1780, Chabanon ; 1795, Naigeon ; 1810, N. Lemercier ; 1841, Victor Hugo. Amongst those who have never sat in the Academy are Molière, le Rochefoucauld, Regnard, Lesage, J. J. Rousseau, Béranger, and, naturally enough, the independent lexicographers. In fact an academician, Furetière, despairing of seeing the Academy's dictionary completed, began one on his own account : whereupon (in 1685) he was expelled from the society. He had his revenge, both by lampooning the Academy, and by publishing his dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> This list includes, for prose, Amyot, Montaigne, du Vair, Desportes, Charon, Bertaud, Marion, de la Guesle, Pibrac, d'Espèsses, Arnaud, the *Catholicon* from the *Satire Ménippée*, the *Mémoires* of Marguerite of Navarre, Coëtéan, Duperron, de Sales, d'Urfé, de Molieres, Malherbe, Duplessis-Mornay, d'Ossat, de Lanoue, de Dammartin, de Refuge, d'Aubigné, and — Bardin and du Chastelet, as a matter of course : these two being academicians already deceased. To represent the poets were chosen Marot, Saint-Gelais, Ronsard, du Bellay, du Bartas, Desportes, Bertrand, Duperron, Garnier, Regnier, Malherbe, des Lingendes, Motin, Touvant, Mouluron, Theophile, Passerat, Rapin, and Sainte-Marthe.

<sup>3</sup> 1585-1650.



*livraison* appeared in 1867. On account of this slowness in bringing out its dictionary the Academy was, from the very beginning, the but of a number of epigrams, whereof one by Boisrobert is worth quoting :—

“ Six months they’ve been engaged on F :  
O that my fate would guarantee  
That I should keep alive till G. <sup>1</sup>

The plan of the Dictionary is conceived in a somewhat cumbersome method, necessarily involving great labour in the first instance, and continuous application in each successive generation. According to the preface of the first *livraison* of its present edition, the Academy intends to publish an Historical Dictionary of the French Language, “where the words will be followed, through all their vicissitudes of form, construction, and acceptance, from their origin up to the present time ;” where the language to be studied will be that of “ordinary life and literature,” with “the orthographical variations,” with abundance of examples. Formerly the Academy arranged all words in classes of relative dignity, as fit for the sublime style, the burlesque, the familiar, and the like ; a scheme which could evidently be quite satisfactory only under a despotism. Whilst man is man, and literary influences are what they are, it is in vain either to prescribe or to proscribe a word more effectually than is done by the example of the great prose writers and poets themselves, whose authority must always be taken at first-hand. In spite of what they told us in the nursery, humanity is perpetuated from parent to child, and not by favour of the doctors.

Of course empiricism and pedantry abounded amongst our early dictionary-makers ; and the language suffered as well as gained by them. Amongst other arbitrary measures, they

<sup>1</sup> In 1819, Andrieux, secretary of the Academy, said, “I shall die of the Dictionary.”

were on the point of suppressing the serviceable *car*; and their irresponsible high-handedness drew from Ménage a spirited *Petition from the Dictionaries to the Gentlemen of the French Academy*, which was really a powerful reclamation against the absurdity of certain of their judgments.<sup>1</sup>

From henceforth it becomes necessary for us, in approaching the life or the works of a known celebrated French writer, to seek out his name upon the tablets of the Academy; and the result of our search must be either to increase or to diminish the praise of a society to which all the authors of first rank, in every age, ought of right to belong.

## § 2. DESCARTES.

One author in the seventeenth century, in addition to Molière, was never invited to take his seat in the Parliament of letters; one author never dreamed of submitting himself as a candidate for what was, after all, at first, a doubtful honour. No philosopher of great name appears amongst the early members of the Academy; and least of all was it likely that an exception would be found in René Descartes,<sup>2</sup> a fugitive, if not an exile from his native country, who, if he had

<sup>1</sup> The first verses are about the best:—

" A nos seigneurs académiques,	Disant que, depuis trente années,
Nos seigneurs les hypercritiques,	On a, par diverses menées,
Souverains arbitres des mots,	Banni des romans, des poulets,
Doctes faiseurs d'avant-propos,	Des lettres douces, des billets,
Cardinal-historiographes,	Des madrigaux, des élégies,
Surintendants des orthographes,	Des sonnets et des comédies,
Raffineurs de locutions,	Ces nobles mots, <i>meut</i> , <i>ains</i> , <i>jaçoit</i> ,
Entrepreneurs de versions,	<i>Ores</i> , <i>alors</i> , <i>maint</i> , <i>ainsi</i> <i>sait</i> ,
Peseurs de brèves et de longues,	<i>A-tant</i> , <i>si</i> <i>que</i> , <i>pîteux</i> , <i>icelle</i> ,
De voyelles et de diphthongues,	<i>Trop-plus</i> , <i>trop-mieux</i> , <i>blancisse</i> , <i>isneile</i> ,
Supplie humblement Calepin,	<i>Pièça</i> , <i>tollir</i> , <i>illec</i> , <i>ainçois</i> ,
Avec Nicot, Estienne, Oudin :	Comme étant de mauvais français."

<sup>2</sup> 1596-1650.

not jealously concealed his opinions in his lifetime, would have been still more obnoxious to Court, Parliament, University, and Sorbonne than Pascal himself, and who was scarcely in his grave before the University of Paris claimed from Parliament the execution against his disciples of the fatuous decree of 1624, condemning to death "those who should teach doctrines contrary to those of the ancient and approved authors." The sycophants of a cardinal—even of one of the most liberal-minded of cardinals—were the last men to do honour to the high-priest of natural philosophy and human reason. And yet, considering what the object and aims of the Academy professedly were, few independent authors of the seventeenth century better deserved a place amongst them than Descartes, who, at a time when Latin was the recognised and almost universal language of philosophy, wrote his *Discourse on Method* in "the language of his country, the vulgar tongue," desiring to address himself to "those who employ simply their pure natural reason." The honour and service done to the vaunted successor and heir of Latin and Greek might have condoned the direct appeal from scholasticism to common sense. For, after all, however much Descartes prided himself on conversing directly and familiarly with the minds of the least sophisticated of his fellow-men, no prose style amongst the various styles of his contemporaries was at once more dignified, more characteristically French, and at the same time more closely modelled upon, and, as it were, translated from the Latin diction. So much is this the case that enthusiastic critics have extolled the language of Descartes as a very pattern of French prose, worthy of all imitation, and all but incapable of improvement. The praise appears to us to be exaggerated; for Descartes was, as we shall see, prolix and even cumbrous; eminently severe, logical, and effective, but exacting a sustained attention, and destitute of almost every adornment save that of an unbroken lucidity of thought and method.

Descartes, indeed, neither received nor sought much appreciation from any source during his lifetime. He was more than forty years old when he published his first work, a *Discourse on the Method of regulating the Reason and of inquiring after Scientific Truth*. Four years later appeared his *Metaphysical Meditations*; and less than six years before his death he gave to the world the *Principles of Philosophy*. He did not write much, but preferred to think and wait; keeping, it would seem, his body in perpetual activity, and selecting such pursuits as would leave his mind most free. His father was a man of good position, member of the Parliament of Rennes, who, finding that his son was weaker in muscle than in brain, suffered him to follow his natural bent. This led him to study, to write poetry, to listen to eloquent preachers and lecturers, and, when he was old enough, to travel. "For nine years," he himself tells us, "I did nothing else than roll hither and thither in the world, seeking to be a spectator rather than an actor in the comedies played therein." For a short time (1617) he served in the ranks of Maurice of Nassau, then went into Germany to serve under the Duke of Bavaria, after this under the Count de Bucquoy, travelled through Moravia, Silesia, a part of Poland and North Germany, Holland, and finally returned to Paris in 1622. It seems to have been during this period that the teeming thoughts of his well-disciplined mind began to assume their definite organisation, and to forecast to the young philosopher the system of which he was to become the exponent. He was some time before he could realise the idea with precision, and flatter himself that he had found a clue to a worthy scientific method<sup>1</sup>—to that method which Bacon had anxiously and unsuccessfully sought, and which he placed first in his list of the *desiderata* of science, the method of all other methods, the science of sciences. With this thought in his mind he re-

<sup>1</sup> "Mirabilis scientiæ fundamenta."



turned to France ; and apparently fearing to stay in a land where opinion at that time enjoyed so little liberty, took refuge in a country which was already the chosen home of many of his compatriots—in Holland. Even there he was pursued by prejudice and threats ; or, if not so, he was apprehensive of them, and he finally settled in Sweden. Shall we call it timidity or over-sensitiveness—that strange reluctance of a staunch and well-trained mind to incur odium and give offence ? He had written a *Treatise on the World*, following the principles laid down by Copernicus ; but the work never appeared. Writing to his friend Mersenne, who had been his fellow-student under the Jesuits at la Flèche, he declared that “he would not for the world there should proceed from him a discourse containing the slightest word which might be disapproved by the Church.” So great an effort was it, in the days of Pascal and Descartes, to disentangle oneself from the systems in vogue, and to face the whole world with a denial of its most venerable beliefs. Descartes did not escape the penalty of his timidity. The man who deprecates his doctrine in delivering it must not expect to see himself acknowledged as the promulgator of a new faith ; and Descartes has perhaps not even yet been esteemed at his true value. He taught before all things the science of universal knowledge ; yet he has been regarded, in France especially, first as a mathematician alone, then as a metaphysician in chief. He was more than either of these : a physiologist, a chemist, a logician ; and more than all together, a philosopher whose subject matter was the sciences ; a philosopher not only of the known but also of the knowable. “The sciences,” he said, “are so bound up with each other that it is easier to learn them all at once than to detach them. . . . Philosophy is the cognisance of all that a man can know.” Within this “all” Descartes admits no lines of demarcation, no boundaries unpierced by the thousand nerves and ducts which

permeate the single living organism of knowledge. From God to the intelligence of the brutes, from the star to the plant, from the law to the phenomenon, all is one, and all is bound together by a melody of law, by a harmony of cause and effect, which is itself embraced within the sphere of the knowable, and which Descartes died desiring to know.

If we were writing a history of philosophy we should have a long chapter before us, comprising an examination of the method by which Descartes began anew the evolution of philosophy from phenomena, and passed *ab ovo usque ad aquilam*. Here it is impossible : we can but designate what may be read thoroughly elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The basis of his system, as it was indeed the basis of Bacon's, and of every system which has enabled the human mind to advance one clear step in the pursuit of truth, is the initiation of all argument from simple, indisputable, incontrovertible facts, and the acceptance of nothing as a fact without extreme caution and ample verification. Hear him enlarging upon the value of this certainty in matters of belief, and revealing the frame of mind which he himself brought to the consideration of scientific truth.

"I had always a great desire to learn how to distinguish the true from the false, in order to see clearly what I was doing, and to advance on my way securely. It is true that whilst I merely observed the manners of other men, I found in them little whereby to assure myself, and that I remarked in them almost as much diversity as I had before in the opinions of philosophers ; so that

<sup>1</sup> Descartes' chief works are *Essais de Philosophie, ou Discours de la Méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et rechercher la vérité dans les sciences. Puis, la Dioptrique, les Météores et la Géométrie, qui sont des essais de cette méthode ; Méditations de prima Philosophiæ, ubi de Dei existentia et animæ immortalitate, etc.*, followed by *Objections* by Descartes and others ; *Principia Philosophiæ*, and *Traité des Passions de l'âme*. After his death were published *Règles pour la direction de l'esprit*, and *le Traité de l'homme et de la formation du fœtus*. Of his collected works several editions have appeared, the last one by M. Cousin, 1824-26.

the greatest profit I derived from them was that, seeing several things which, though they seem to us very extravagant and ridiculous, are still commonly received and approved by other great nations, I learned to believe in nothing too firmly of that which had only been commended to me by example and custom ; and thus I freed myself little by little from many errors which darken our natural light, and render us less capable of understanding what is reasonable. But after I had spent a few years in thus studying the book of the world, and in striving to acquire some experience, I one day resolved to study myself also, and to employ the whole force of my mind in choosing the ways I ought to follow ; which succeeded with me much better, I think, than if I had never departed from my country nor from my books." <sup>1</sup>

And yet this great philosopher, when ill, and though he "had studied himself," refused to take the medicines prescribed, and would not be bled, until it was too late to do him any good !

<sup>1</sup> "J'avais toujours un extrême désir d'apprendre à distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, pour voir clair en mes actions, et marcher avec assurance en cette vie. Il est vrai que, pendant que je ne faisais que considérer les mœurs des autres hommes, je n'y trouvais guères de quoi m'assurer, et que j'y remarquai quasi autant de diversité que j'avais fait auparavant entre les opinions des philosophes ; en sorte que le plus grand profit que j'en retirais, était que, voyant plusieurs choses, qui, bien qu'elles nous semblent fort extravagantes et ridicules, ne laissent pas d'être communément reçues et approuvées par d'autres grands peuples, j'apprenais à ne rien croire trop fermement de ce qui ne m'avait été persuadé que par l'exemple et par la coutume ; et ainsi je me délivrais peu à peu de beaucoup d'erreurs qui peuvent ofusquer notre lumière naturelle, et nous rendre moins capables d'entendre raison. Mais, après que j'eus employé quelques années à étudier ainsi dans le livre du monde, et à tâcher d'acquérir quelque expérience, je pris un jour résolution d'étudier aussi en moi-même, et d'employer toutes les forces de mon esprit à choisir les chemins que je devais suivre, ce qui me réussit beaucoup mieux, ce me semble, que si je ne me fusse jamais éloigné ni de mon pays ni de mes livres."—*Discours de la méthode*, ire partie.

## BOOK V.

### THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. THE COURT AND ITS INFLUENCE.

THE age of Louis XIV. has been called the Augustan age of French literature, and not without sufficient reason. It was the age of maturity, both in thought and style; the age of the classical drama, tragic and comic; of classical prose, oratorical, historical, and didactic; the age of excellence in a *genre* which, perhaps as distinctly as anything else, characterises the French genius in memoirs and polite correspondence; the age of order, precision, harmony in literary ideas, of arrangement, correctness, elevation in literary expression. Manifestly the main features of an Augustan age were present here, as they had been first conspicuously assembled and illustrated under Cæsar Augustus in Rome, as they were illustrated, though with inferior force, under Queen Anne in England. But again, the reign of Louis XIV. was an age of national splendour, in the centre whereof stood a powerful autocrat, every inch a king, whose court was the most brilliant in Europe, and his capital the most refined in the world. The same king was a constant patron of the arts and of literature, and displayed, through nearly three quarters of a century,<sup>1</sup> a sumptuousness and magnificence, which ruined the country over which he reigned, but which no

<sup>1</sup> Louis XIV. reigned seventy-two years, from 1643 to 1715; the first eight years under the regency of his mother. He was born in 1638.



other western monarch has had the means of excelling or the power of equalling. Under him were fostered not merely letters and the arts, but also the science of pomp and ceremonial, the culture of pleasure and social intercourse, the pursuit of military glory and political power. It may be said of the *Grand Monarque* that, as it fell to his lot to inherit the legacy of the Renaissance, so he did what in him lay to develop its spirit, and to adorn the epoch in which he lived. His influence upon literature was necessarily great, as nearly every chapter of our present volume must contribute to show; but although this influence tended almost invariably to enhance the fame of literary men and of their works, it was by no means always an influence for good. The virtues of the king lie on the side of his kingliness; what he was as a man we may read in the pages of history, and the memoirs of Saint Simon shall tell us later on.<sup>1</sup>

We have already trenched considerably upon the age of Louis XIV. It was during his minority that the troubles of the Fronde broke forth, and were finally suppressed by Anne of Austria<sup>2</sup> and Cardinal Mazarin.<sup>3</sup> Voiture died in the fifth year of his reign, Descartes and Vaugelas a couple of years later, and Balzac five years after that. Louis attained his majority in 1651;<sup>4</sup> and it was in 1653 that Innocent X. condemned the five propositions extracted from the works of Jansen by his enemies, which condemnation led to the production of the *Lettres Provinciales*.<sup>5</sup> Corneille was at the height of his fame before the king ascended the throne, but his career extended over more than forty years of Louis' reign. Nevertheless it is not without sufficient reason that the age of the later classical Renaissance is carried beyond the middle of the seventeenth century, and that the age of

<sup>1</sup> Book v. ch. v. *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> 1601-1666.

<sup>3</sup> 1602-1661.

<sup>4</sup> He was declared of age by a *lit de justice*.

<sup>5</sup> See bk. iv. ch. 6, p. 140 *et passim*.

Louis XIV., in so far as it may be described as distinctively Augustan, is limited to the last fifty, or at most sixty years of his life. The *Grand Monarque* arrived at the exercise of his full royal dignities only at the death of Mazarin;<sup>1</sup> and although his mind and body were early matured, we cannot credit him with any considerable personal influence on his people before that time. If it were incumbent upon the literary historian to fix the date when the so-called Augustan age should be held to have commenced, we suppose that none more satisfactory could be selected than the year in which Molière and his *Illustre Théâtre*, newly returned from its twelve years' provincial tour, played before the young king in the *Salle des Gardes* of the Louvre,<sup>2</sup> and so pleased him, that from that time forward Louis became a generous encourager of the stage, and, by his appreciation of Molière's talent, proved himself at once a capable critic.

When we try to estimate the influence exerted by Louis XIV. upon his age, we must not overlook the fact that France, as Louis found it, was France as Richelieu and Mazarin had left it, and that the relations existing between the *Grand Monarque* and his nobles and lesser subjects were, in great measure, the necessary outcome of the first cardinal's policy. One of the most important, and not one of the most happy achievements of Richelieu was the creation of the court — of that gay and brilliant court which attracted to the capital much of the wealth and most of the intellect of France, and which, assisted by the unvarying policy of centralisation pursued by successive generations of statesmen, was to make Paris everything, and the provinces at all events unimportant by comparison. This sacrifice of the country on the shrine of Paris is the prominent fact of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France, the pivot upon which modern French history turns; and it must also be an ever-present

<sup>1</sup> March 9th, 1661.

<sup>2</sup> October 24th, 1658.

light to the student of modern French literature. More and more from henceforth the intellectual annals of France will be found to be the intellectual annals of Paris. The verdict of a Parisian drawing-room, the acclamations of the courtiers, the smile of the king, were rewards which every Frenchman coveted, and for which he was content to resign almost all the remaining allurements of life. If a Racine was inconsolable because the king frowned upon him ; if a Molière strove and lived for the king's favour ; if a Fénelon was conspicuous as the only writer of note in his age who maintained his independence of royal approval or dislike, we may judge what must have been the tone of the elbowing crowd which danced attendance on the monarch at Versailles. And what a crowd it was ! No epoch of history has been better elucidated and illustrated than the hundred and fifty years which preceded the French Revolution, throughout the whole of which the causes which produced that cataclysm of ideas and society were continuously and steadily at work. The reigns of Louis XIV., Louis XV., and Louis XVI., have been photographed with remarkable skill,<sup>1</sup> and furnish a picture of which it is impossible to dispute the fidelity and the force. The whole condition of French society, as it was moulded and shaped by Richelieu and by the three Louis, is as familiar to the ordinary student of history as the condition of society in our own days. The king at the top of the social scale, surrounded by his privileges, claiming immunity from the duties which those privileges involved, retiring within a charmed circle of dignity and ceremonial, owning no responsibility to his subjects save through his ministers, and through these only by the observance of a rigid ceremonial, exacting all France as his property, and draining his pleasures from her miseries, making himself thus the head and centre of all abuses ;—the nobility and clergy, naturally imitating the

<sup>1</sup> See H. Taine, *Ancien Régime*, bk. i. ch. 3-4, and *passim*.

king, casting off every duty not absolutely inevitable, delegating their functions to ill-paid and inefficient subordinates, ruining their dependants in order to shine at the king's court, and ruining themselves to purchase a few years of distinction, pleasure, and royal favour, most of them persistently absent from their estates, which they leave to the irresponsible management of agents ;—and at the base of the rapidly disorganising fabric, an oppressed and overburdened populace, so ground down by the taxes necessary for the monstrous extravagance of throne and state that they have neither means nor heart to till the soil, ill housed and ill fed, losing their very independence and self-respect under the sheer inability to preserve themselves from starvation ; such, in short, is the glaring contrast afforded by French society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

An Englishman<sup>1</sup> who travelled in France almost a hundred years before Arthur Young, gives a number of details of manners and customs about the close of the seventeenth century, which are very serviceable towards the acquisition of an adequate conception of the state of society in France, and in Paris more particularly, during the reign of Louis XIV. Though he is by no means so full or so vivid as his more celebrated countryman who pictured France on the eve of the Revolution, Dr. Lister draws faithfully from the life, and his pages reveal, clearly enough, the contrast between the hard and meagre life of the nation as a whole, and the brilliant display and luxury of its more fortunate classes. Side by side with the squalor and scanty diet of the commonalty, we are here enabled to see the gay and wasteful self-indulgence of fashionable Parisian life. In Paris our traveller found the bulk of the people living on coarse

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Martin Lister, *A Journey to Paris in the year 1698* ; it has been reprinted by Pinkerton, in his *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. iv.



brown bread and herbs, whilst the wealthier orders devoted their whole days and nights to pleasure. Take one or two sketches :—

“ Coaching in visits is the great and daily business of people of quality ; but in the evenings the Cour de la Reyne is much frequented, and a great rendezvous of people of the best fashion. The place, indeed, is very commodious and pleasant, being three alleys set with high trees, of a great length, all along the bank of the river Seine, inclosed at each end with noble gates ; and in the middle a very large circle to turn in. The middle alley holds four lines of coaches at least, and each side alley two apiece ; these eight lines of coaches may, when full, supposing them to contain near eighty coaches apiece, amount to about six or seven hundred. On the field side, joining close to the alleys of the coaches, there are several acres of meadow planted with trees, well grown, into narrow alleys in quincunx order, to walk in the grass, if any have a mind to light ; and this must needs be very agreeable in the heats of summer, which we stayed not to enjoy. One thing this Cours is short of ours in Hyde Park, for if full you cannot in an hour see the company twice you have a mind to see, and you are confined to your line, and oftentimes the princes of the blood coming in, and driving *at pleasure*, make a strange stop and embarrass.”

More than one of Molière’s plays may be located in the quincunx alleys leading to and from the Cours de la Reine ; as for instance the scenes between the two young lovers in the *Bores*. Let us follow our guide indoors to the bedroom of the Duchess of Lesdiguières at Les Diguières. —

“ In the apartment of the Duchess, which was all of her own contrivance, and had an air of state and agreeableness beyond anything I had seen, I observed hanging down in the middle of the bedchamber the finest chrystal candlestick in France : the pieces were all bought single by her, and the contrivance of setting them together was her own : it cost twelve thousand crowns. But before I left the garden, in an obscure parterre I saw the tomb of a cat, viz. a black cat couchant upon a white marble cushion, fringed with gold, and gold tassels hanging at the corners

upon a square black marble pedestal. On one of the sides of that marble is writ, in letters of gold :—

‘ Cy gist Menine la plus aimable et la  
Plus aimée de toutes les chattes.’

“ On the other side :—

‘ Cy gist une chatte jolie :  
Sa maistresse, qui n'aimoit rien,  
L'aime jusques à la folie  
Pour quoi dire ! on le voit bien.’ ”

Take, again, the character of the *Grand Monarque*, as our English traveller had it depicted for him at Marly :—

“ As for their own king, they were much in the praise of him, as one may easily imagine : that his retirement hither was mostly for his health ; that he left Versailles every Tuesday night, and came hither with a select company of lords and ladies ; that he returned not till Saturday night, and sometimes intermitted ten or fourteen days ; so that he spent half his time here in repose ; that he was the most affable prince in the world, and never out of humour, of a pleasant and open conversation where it pleased him ; easy of access, and never sent any one away discontented ; the most bountiful master in the world, of which there were ten thousand instances ; nothing of merit in any kind, but he most readily and cheerfully rewarded, ever, of late years at least, preferring the virtuous ; so on the other hand, he never spared the rebellious and obstinate ; that the government of his people could not be carried on with less severity and strictness ; nor the taxes which were necessary to support it, raised ; that he delighted not in blood or persecution ; but that the art of government had different rules, according to the climate and nature of the people where and upon whom it was to be put in practice. His great wisdom appeared in nothing more, than in preserving (*sic*) himself amidst his troops, his converts, and numerous family, all in a manner fit for the throne ; the greatness of his mind, and magnificence in his buildings. This was the sum of the discourse these gentlemen were pleased to entertain me with.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The king, “ of late years at least, preferring the virtuous ”— Louis XIV. being then sixty years old — “ and preserving himself amidst his troops, his

The libraries of Paris, as described by the English visitor were neither few nor poorly supplied, but Dr. Lister observed that "the books which were written by Protestants were locked up in wire cases, not to be come at without particular leave."

If, in the age of Louis XIV. and his successors, all France was Paris, so all Paris—that is to say, all fashionable Paris, and the whole literary life of Paris—was centred in the drawing-room. "In France, everything contributes to make the spirit of society flourish; in this the national genius accords with the political order of things, and it is as though the plant had been selected for the soil in the first instance. The Frenchman instinctively loves to find himself in company, and, the reason is, that he does well and easily whatever society requires. . . . He would suffer almost as much from being rude as from encountering rudeness. . . . When we give pleasure, others like to give us pleasure, and what we give in thoughtfulness is returned to us in attentions. In such company one can converse; for to converse is to amuse others by amusing oneself, and there is no more lively pleasure for a Frenchman. Brisk and sinuous conversation is for him like the flight of a bird; from idea to idea he flits, alert, excited by the 'go' of others, with a spring, with circuits, with sudden returns, low down, on high, skimming the ground or the hill-tops, neither burying himself in holes nor impeding himself in thickets, nor seeking from the thousand objects

converts, and numerous family"—he having at that time only one legitimate child alive—require no comment. But the flattering portrait, given above, demands to be corrected by history, which is more apt to be just than complaisant. The mode whereby the intendants and tax-collectors raised the vast sums required for the expenditure of the king and his ministers, has nowhere been better explained than in Taine's *Ancien Régime*, or by Sir James Stephen, *Lectures on the History of France*, Lectures 13 and 14. And as for the mildness of the royal disposition, it would be well to read M. Henri Martin's *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 626, and on the *dragonnades* directed against the Protestants Sir John Resesby's *Travels and Memoirs*.

which he glides past anything else than the variety and pleasantness of their aspect. Thus gifted and inclined, he is fitted for a state of things which, during ten hours in the day, brought men together; the inborn temper harmonises with the social condition to bring the drawing-room to perfection. At the head of all the king sets the example."<sup>1</sup> "Louis XIV. conversed," Madame de Caylus informs us,<sup>2</sup> "perfectly. Whether he would banter or make jokes, or whether he condescended to tell a story, it was with infinite grace, a noble and refined bearing which I have seen in none but him."

The king's patronage and encouragement of letters were not confined to the exercise of his power of polite conversation, nor to the munificence with which he showered pecuniary rewards upon men distinguished in literature, science, and art. The Academy had special reason to be grateful, both to him and to Colbert, who occupied the *fauteuil* first accorded to Silhon,<sup>3</sup> and who, in 1666, established the *Académie des Sciences*.<sup>4</sup> Even the foreign ambassadors were instructed to invite, from all the countries of Europe, men of literary and artistic distinction, many of whom settled in Paris, whilst others received in their own countries substantial favours from the king of France. But it was in his own court that the patronage of Louis was most conspicuous and most influential.

"Material benefits,<sup>5</sup> the social advantages accorded to men of letters or artists, are very far from completely explaining the action exerted by Louis XIV. on the genius of his time. To the sciences he furnished with liberality the instruments of their researches and their observations: this is all that depends upon supreme power; for letters and the arts he can do, and he does, more. He offers them at his court an atmc-

<sup>1</sup> H. Taine, *l'Ancien Régime*, bk. ii. ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs*, p. 108. See also Saint Simon, *Mémoires*, vol. xii. 161.

<sup>3</sup> 1596-1667.

<sup>4</sup> Mazarin, in 1648, had established an *Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture*.

<sup>5</sup> Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 163.



sphere which determines their development in a certain direction. He imposes upon them, in a kind of general harmony, the spirit of order, unity, gravity, tempered by the elegance which is in himself, and which is, so to speak, himself. He assumes from his throne that species of spiritual direction which an individual society had possessed, and makes himself the inheritor of the hôtel de Rambouillet, at the same time enlarging his inheritance. What an influence upon the productions of the intellect and the imagination must not have been exercised by the admission of writers and artists into that court-life in which everything breathes an air of grandeur of taste and magnificence, in which everything at once animates, sustains, and embraces the flight of the spirit!"

## § 2. MOLIERE.

The drama attained its highest excellence and repute in the age of Louis XIV., and we should not be making a very hazardous assertion if we were to say that the literature of that epoch in France attained its height of glory in the drama. No French dramatist has excelled Molière, Corneille, and Racine; no group of authors in the seventeenth century were more brilliant, more powerful, more originaive. When we turn our eyes upon the stage for which these three wrote, we find ourselves in the full splendour of the Augustan age, in all its refinement and culture, its luxury and elegance, its strength of wit and justness of expression, its social polish and gorgeous display. Great as was the advance made by the audience of Jodelle upon the audience of the moralities and *soties*,<sup>1</sup> the advance of the court and society under the Bourbons upon the court and society under the Valois was equally

<sup>1</sup> See about Jodelle, bk. iv. ch. 4, § 2.

great. The *Grand Monarque*, listening to a masterpiece of Corneille, Molière, or Racine, surrounded by his brilliant circle of lords and ladies, represented an almost incalculable development of ceremonious culture, in idea, in apparel, and in general surroundings, since the day when, about a hundred years before, whilst the blossom of the Renaissance was barely expanded, the popinjay King Henry II. looked on at the first crude sketch of a French classical play. Stage, scenery, appointments, audience, critic, music, actors, and authors, all now bore witness to and adorned, as they were in fact the most elaborate product of, an Augustan age.

Paris up to this time had had little opportunity of knowing what true comedy was. It had had farces in abundance, not only of home growth but imported, and from Italy in particular. When Molière came before the public with his homogeneous and well-trained company, and his repertory of excellent character-sketches and comic situations, the prevailing sentiment was expressed by a member of the audience which listened to the first production of his *Précieuses Ridicules*: "Courage, Molière, this is genuine comedy!"

France had long been waiting for genuine comedy; waiting rather by an instinctive requirement of the national genius, and with an aptitude to appreciate the highest comic art as soon as it might be manifested, than with any definite conception of the exact thing that was lacking on the stage. The French nature was precisely fitted to produce and to enjoy the loftiest style of character-comedy, but no modern literature had hitherto exhibited that which Molière was to provide. The author of the *Précieuses Ridicules* and *Tartuffe* was essentially the outcome of his age, the dramatist of drawing-room life, whose genius enabled him to wed the foibles of the salon with elegant phraseology, and scenic effect with admirable poetic expression; and the contrast between his lofty and conscientious work and the puerilities and license

of the Spanish and Italian models was as marked as it was readily recognised. Yet it was no easy matter to acclimatise in France even the high style of comedy introduced by Molière, and he had to intermix it with a good many farces to make it go down. For twelve long years, leading the life of a strolling player, Molière observed and studied character; and when at last he thought himself safe from opposition, under the powerful patronage of Louis XIV., the Church, the University, the Sorbonne, and the bigotry of the statesmen—once more united as in the age of Francis I.—conspired to cast stumbling-blocks in the way of literary freedom. It was the authorities of the Church which, shocked and jealous at the enthusiasm which greeted the appearance of *Tartuffe*, brought the veto of the king to bear against the company of the Palais-Royal; and though Molière believed that his private intercession had obtained the removal of this veto, his enemies were bold and powerful enough, during the absence of Louis, on the further representation of the play, to prevent its production a second time. Molière was able to cope with his adversaries, yet it is a noteworthy fact that the decree of excommunication passed against comedians in France was not absolutely rescinded until the present century.

We do not forget that Corneille wrote comedies before Molière; and indeed there is no doubt that the youngest of the two dramatists owed something, even in comedy, to the oldest. Molière began by adapting from and imitating the Italian and Spanish comedy-writers, upon whom many of his first farces were founded; and it is not at all unlikely that he even remodelled some of the earlier *soties*. It was perhaps due to Corneille's influence as much as to anything else that his genius at last discovered its true level. He confessed to Boileau his great indebtedness to *Le Menteur*. "When it was first performed," he says, "I had already a wish to write, but was in doubt as to what it should be. My ideas were still

confused, but this piece determined them. In short, but for the appearance of *Le Menteur*, though I should no doubt have written comedies of intrigue, like *l'Etourdi* or *le Dépit amoureux*, I should perhaps never have written the *Misanthrope*." Eliminate the generosity from this confession, and no doubt the truth remains that Molière did form his best style of comedy upon the master of French tragedy.

Jean Baptiste Poquelin, who subsequently assumed the name of Molière,<sup>1</sup> was born in the year that François de Sales died, one year after the birth of La Fontaine, four years before the birth of his friend Chapelle and of Madame de Sévigné. When the *Cid* was first performed he was fourteen years old, and twenty-two at the time of the first representation of *le Menteur*. The son of a *valet de chambre tapissier* of Louis XIII., he succeeded in due course to the emoluments and honours, such as they were, of his father; but he had early conceived a passion for the stage, and in the year 1643 he attached himself to the *Illustre Théâtre* of Madeleine Béjart, a woman four years his senior. With her were already associated her brother Joseph, her sister Geneviève, about two years younger than Molière, and eight others, most of whom had dropped out of the company before its final settlement in Paris. For a year or two the *Illustre Théâtre* tempted fortune in the capital without success, and in 1646 they commenced a tour through the provinces which was destined to continue for twelve years. The debts which they had incurred weighed upon them during the whole of this time, and principally upon Molière, who was once imprisoned and several times arrested at the suit of the company's creditors. No doubt these latter had discovered that the young actor had friends who would rescue him from durance, which was done on several occasions, but as late as 1660 we read of Molière's discharging

<sup>1</sup> 1622-1673. See the prefatory memoir to the author's translation of the *Dramatic Works of Molière*. Edinburgh: Paterson. 1875.



probably the last of the debts for which at this period he made himself responsible.

The plays first acted by Molière and his friends were, of course, the farces then most in vogue ; amongst others the comedies of Scarron, and the yet inferior productions of Denis Beys and Desfontaines. The former had written a ridiculous piece called *l'Hôpital des Fous*. The latter was the author of *Eurymédon ou l'illustre Pirate*; *l'illustre Comédien, ou le Martyre de Saint Genest*, and of several other inflated pieces. It would be difficult to fix the exact date at which Molière's earliest plays were produced, but it is probable that he began to write for his company as soon as he had enlisted in it. He seems, like Shakspeare, to have, in part at least, adapted the plays of others ; but in the year 1653, if not earlier, he had produced *l'Etourdi*, and in 1656 *le Dépit amoureux*.

The *Illustre Théâtre* is heard of at Nantes, Limoges, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Narbonne, Lyons, where Molière produced his first serious attempt at high comedy in verse, *l'Etourdi*. In 1653 they played by invitation at the country-seat of the Prince de Conti, the schoolfellow of Molière. Three years later they played the *Dépit amoureux* at Beziers, during the meeting in that town of the Parliament of Languedoc. At Grenoble, in 1658, the painter Mignard, with other of his admirers, persuaded him to take his company—for he was joint-manager with Madeleine Béjart—to Paris ; and this he did, after a concluding trip to Rouen. In Paris they began by playing before Philippe, Duke of Anjou, the brother of Louis XIV., who took them under his protection, and introduced them to the court. At this time the company was considerably stronger, as well as richer, than when it left Paris. There were now four ladies, Madeleine Béjart, Geneviève Béjart, Duparc, and Debric ; the two brothers Béjart—the youngest, Louis, had joined at Lyons—Duparc, Debric, Dufresne, and Croisac, making, with Molière himself,

eleven persons. It may be concluded that their tour—or, at all events, that part of it which dated from Lyons—had been very successful; for we find that Joseph Béjart, who died early in 1659, left behind him a fortune of twenty-four thousand golden crowns. So at least we are told by the physician Guy-Patin, in a letter dated May 27, 1659; and he adds, “Is it not enough to make one believe that Peru is no longer in America, but in Paris?”

The condition of the drama in Paris at the time when Molière returned to the capital was anything but satisfactory. There were in 1658 five theatres in Paris: one at the hôtel de Bourgogne; one at the Marais; one under the patronage of Mademoiselle, daughter of Gaston, Duke of Orleans; a Spanish company; and an Italian company at the Petit Bourbon, under the managership of Torelli. It was with the first and last of these that Molière came chiefly into conflict; and it is probable that the other three were of no great account, at all events as competitors for the favour of the general public. Torelli soon found that the new comer commanded his hundreds where he himself could only count by scores, and he gave up the Petit Bourbon to Molière in 1659.

Molière's company called themselves *Comédiens de Monsieur*; and after Torelli had left them full possession of the Petit Bourbon, their greatest rivals in public favour were the company at the hôtel de Bourgogne, who played Corneille, Sendéry, Scarron, and other authors of less note. In 1659 Molière took the town by storm with his *Précieuses Ridicules*, a satire in one act on the exaggerations of the hôtel de Rambouillet. This was followed in the succeeding year by *Sganarelle ou Le Cornu Imaginaire*; in the beginning of 1661 appeared *Don Garcie de Navarre*, a heroic piece in five acts, intended to delineate the evils of passionate jealousy; and in the same year were produced *l'École des Maris*, a satire on

unreasonable jealousy, and *Les Fâcheux*, a court sketch of several kinds of bores; in 1662 *l'École des Femmes*, an attempt to show the danger of bringing girls up in too strict a manner, with its sequel, the *Critique de l'École des Femmes*, in the year after. Boursault,<sup>1</sup> an amiable man, but a mediocre playwright, envious of Molière's growing fame, wrote for the hôtel de Bourgogne, which eagerly accepted, if it did not bespeak his piece, *Le Portrait du Peintre ou la Contre-critique de l'École des Femmes*, in which he attempted to bring his brother-author into ridicule; but Molière took ample revenge in his *Impromptu de Versailles*, in which he soundly lashed his rivals; though it may be mentioned to his honour that it was never printed during his lifetime. In 1664 he wrote the *Mariage Forcé*, a one-act piece with eight *entrées de ballet*, specially designed for court representation, in which the king himself was pleased to dance; and, a month or two later, the *Princesse d'Elide*, a cumbrous and comparatively inferior production, done in great haste at the command of Louis XIV., who had determined upon an eight days' festival in honour of Louise de la Vallière.

It was during these festivities that, for the first time, was represented the three first acts of Molière's masterpiece, *Tartuffe ou l'Imposteur*, a play well worthy of the best and most legitimate subject which satire can have to deal with. Nothing can be fairer or more appropriate than that the art which consists in feigning a representation of real life on the stage should take, as the butt of its ridicule and the object of its skill, the man whose whole life and character are engaged in feigning the possession of virtue, and seeming to be that which he is not. The earliest satirists and dramatists have seized on the topic with avidity; and to go no farther out of our way than Molière's predecessors in France, we may mention the authors of the romance of *Reynard the Fox*, Rutebeuf,

<sup>1</sup> 1638-1701.

Jean de Meung, the author of the *Farce des Brus*, Regnier, Scarron, even Pascal. Very various, no doubt, are the hypocritical types encountered in the works of these and other satirists; but all must necessarily have a certain amount of family likeness, and many a hereditary trait is recognised as common to at least two, if not to all of the race. "Molière gives us the hypocrite by nature, the man who would be a canting scoundrel even if it did not 'pay'; who cannot help being so; who is a human being, and therefore not perfect; who is a man, and thus sensually inclined; who employs certain means to subdue his passions, and to become a 'whited sepulchre,' but who gives all the more way to them when he imagines that he can do so with impunity." Tartuffe, who ought to be bound to Orgon by the strongest ties of gratitude, allows the son to be turned out of the house by his father, because the latter will not believe the accusations brought against the hypocrite—tries to seduce his benefactor's wife, to marry his daughter by a first marriage; and finally, after having obtained all his dupe's property, betrays him to the king as a criminal against the state. The *dénouement* of the play is that Tartuffe himself is led to prison, and that vice is for the nonce punished on the stage as it deserves to be.<sup>1</sup> We shall give one scene of Molière as a specimen of his skill, namely the one in which Tartuffe declares his love to Elmire, Orgon's wife, whilst Damis, the latter's son, is secretly present during the conversation:—

*Tartuffe.* May Heaven for ever in its mighty goodness,  
Bestow upon you health of soul and body,  
And bless your days as much as can desire  
The humblest among those its love directs!

*Elmire.* I'm much obliged for such a pious wish.  
But let us sit—we shall be more at ease.

*Tartuffe (seated).* Are you recovered quite from the attack?

<sup>1</sup> See the Introductory Notice to *Tartuffe*, in my edition of Molière, vol. iv. p. 97, *et passim*.



*Elmire.* Yes, quite ; and very soon the fever left me.

*Tartuffe.* My prayers have not sufficient influence  
To have drawn down this gracious gift from high ;  
But no devout entreaties were sent up  
Unless they asked for your recovery.

*Elmire.* You are too anxious in your zeal for me.

*Tartuffe.* We cannot cherish your dear health too much ;  
And to restore it, I would give my own.

*Elmire.* That's pushing Christian charity too far ;  
And I feel much indebted for this kindness.

*Tartuffe.* I do much less for you than you deserve.

*Elmire.* I wished in private to converse with you,  
And am quite glad that none observes us here.

*Tartuffe.* I, too, am charmed ; and doubtless feel it sweet,  
Dear madam, to be here alone with you.  
I have asked from Heaven this opportunity,  
But until now it was not granted me.

*Elmire.* All that I wish is a few words with you,  
In which you'll bare your heart and nothing hide.

*Tartuffe.* And in return, as no uncommon favour,  
I'll bare before you my entire soul,  
And swear to you that the reports I've spread  
Of visitors attracted by your charms  
Are not inspired by a dislike for you,  
But rather by a fit of passionate zeal,  
And pure designs. . .

*Elmire.* . . . I therefore take it well,  
And think my welfare causes you concern.

*Tartuffe* (*taking Elmire's hand and pressing her fingers*). No doubt,  
dear madam, and my warmth is such . . .

*Elmire.* You squeeze too hard !

*Tartuffe.* . . . 'Tis through excess of zeal  
I never meant to give you any pain,  
And I much sooner would . . . (*He places his hand on  
Elmire's knee*).

*Elmire.* . . . What does there your hand ?

*Tartuffe.* I feel your dress ; the stuff is very soft.

*Elmire.* Oh ! pray desist, the least thing tickles me.

(*Elmire pushes her chair back, and Tartuffe draws near with his.*)

*Tartuffe* (*handing the collar of Elmire*). Bless me! What wondrous skill this lace displays,

They work miraculously now-a-days.

Ne'er did they do so well, in anything.

*Elmire*. True. But about our business let us talk;

They say my husband, breaking from his word,

Gives you his daughter. Tell me, is this true?

*Tartuffe*. He dropp'd a hint; but, madam, sooth to say,  
That's not the happiness for which I am sighing,  
And elsewhere I behold those wondrous charms  
Source of the bliss for which alone I long.

*Elmire*. I trow you do not care for earthly things.

*Tartuffe*. My breast does not contain a heart of stone.

*Elmire*. For me, I think your sighs tend all to heaven,  
And that nought here below stays your desires.

*Tartuffe*. The love which sways us for eternal beauties  
Does not prevent the love of earthly things:  
The works which heaven itself has perfect made,  
Delight our senses, and that easily;

In such as you shine its reflected charms;

In you alone it shows its rarest wonders;

Upon your face such beauties are diffused

As dazzle every eye, win every heart;

And I could not behold you, perfect creature,

Without in you admiring nature's Author,

And feel my heart inflamed with burning love

For his best image painted by Himself.

At first I was afraid this secret ardour

Was but a cunning snare of the foul fiend!

I even resolved then to avoid your presence,

Deeming you stayed the work of my salvation.

But I found out, at last, O! lovely beauty,

That no guilt need attach to this my passion,

Which I can reconcile with modesty;

And this has made me yield my heart to it.

'Tis, I confess, an act of arrant boldness

That I dare make the offer of my heart;

But in your goodness all my hopes are placed,

Not in weak efforts that myself can make.

In you rests all my hope, my welfare, peace,  
On you depends my torment or my bliss;  
In short, by your sole sentence I shall be  
Happy or not, just as it pleases you.

*Elmire.* I own the avowal to be most gallant,  
But, truth to say, it takes me by surprise.  
Methinks you should more strongly arm your heart,  
And well consider such a bold design.  
A pious man like you, and so well known . . .

*Tartuffe.* I am not less a man for being pious;  
And when one contemplates your heavenly charms,  
The heart is captive ta'en, and reasons not.  
I know such speech from me must strange appear;  
But, madam, after all, I'm not an angel;  
And, if you blame the avowal I have made,  
You must condemn your own attractive charms.  
When I beheld their superhuman brightness,  
That very moment you became my queen;  
Th' unheard-of sweetness of your looks divine  
Broke down my stubborn and resisting heart;  
It overcame my fasts, and pray'rs, and tears,  
And led all my desires towards your charms.  
My looks, my sighs, said so a thousand times;  
And now, by speech, I make my meaning clear.  
That you would view with soul a little kind  
The sufferings of your unworthy slave;  
If you would kindly grant some consolation,  
And deign to stoop low as my nothingness.  
For you, sweet marvel, I shall ever feel,  
Devotion which no other equalled yet.  
Your honour runs no risk with me at all,  
Need fear no shame from any act of mine.  
These courtly gallants, on whom women doat,  
Are noisy in their deeds, boast in their speech;  
On their success they often plume themselves;  
They bruit about the favours they receive;  
They indiscreetly betray confidence,  
And desecrate the altar of their love.  
But men like us burn with a prudent flame,

With us for ever secrecy is safe.  
 The care we take of our own reputation  
 Secures from every chance her whom we love ;  
 With us they find, when they accept our hearts,  
 Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

*Elmire.* I listen'd to your speech ; your special pleading  
 Has pretty well explained itself to me.  
 But are you not afraid that I may choose  
 To tell my husband of this gallant ardour,  
 And that the sudden tiding of such love  
 May change the friendship which he feels for you ?

*Tartuffe.* I know that you possess so great a kindness,  
 That you will pardon my temerity ;  
 That you'll excuse, because of human frailty,  
 The violent transports of offending passion,  
 That you'll bethink, by looking at yourself,  
 That people are not blind, and men are flesh and blood.

*Elmire.* Others perhaps might take it differently ;  
 But my discretion here shall show itself ;  
 I shall not tell the matter to my husband ;  
 But, in return, I'll something ask of you :  
 To forward honestly, and without quibbling,  
 The union of Valère with Mariane,  
 And to renounce the unjust power, which would  
 Enrich you with another's property.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "*Tartuffe.* Que le ciel à jamais, par sa toute-bonté,  
 Et de l'âme et du corps vous donne la santé,  
 Et bénisse vos jours autant que le désire  
 Le plus humble de ceux que son amour inspire !

*Elmire.* Je suis fort obligée à ce souhait pieux.  
 Mais prenons une chaise, afin d'être un peu mieux.

*Tartuffe (assis).* Comment de votre mal vous sentez-vous remise ?

*Elmire (assise).* Fort bien ; et cette fièvre a bientôt quitté prise.

*Tartuffe.* Mes prières n'ont pas le mérite qu'il faut  
 Pour avoir attiré cette grace d'en haut ;  
 Mais je n'ai fait au ciel nulle dévotion  
 Qui n'ait eu pour objet votre convalescence.

*Elmire.* Votre zèle pour moi s'est trop inquiété.

*Tartuffe.* On ne peut trop chérir votre chère santé ;  
 Et, pour la rétablir, j'aurois donné la mienne.

*Elmire.* C'est pousser bien avant la charité chrétienne ;



*Tartuffe* made many enemies for Molière, especially amongst the clergy, who were not afraid of being twitted with their too ready application to themselves of the moral of the

Et je vous dois beaucoup pour toutes ces bontés.

*Tartuffe*. Je fais bien moins pour vous que vous ne méritez.

*Elmire*. J'ai voulu vous parler en secret d'une affaire,  
Et suis bien aise, ici, qu'aucun ne nous éclaire.

*Tartuffe*. J'en suis ravi de même ; et, sans doute, il m'est doux,  
Madame, de me voir seul à seul avec vous.  
C'est une occasion qu'au ciel j'ai demandée,  
Sans que, jusqu'à cette heure, il me l'ait accordée.

*Elmire*. Pour moi, ce que je veux, c'est un mot d'entretien,  
Où tout votre cœur s'ouvre, et ne me cache rien.

*Tartuffe*. Et je ne veux aussi, pour grâce singulière,  
Que montrer à vos yeux mon âme tout entière,  
Et vous faire serment que les bruits que j'ai faits  
Des visites qu'ici reçoivent vos attraits  
Ne sont pas envers vous l'effet d'aucune haine,  
Mais plutôt d'un transport de zèle qui m'entraîne,  
Et d'un pur mouvement. . .

*Elmire*. Je le prends bien aussi,  
Et crois que mon salut vous donne ce souci.

*Tartuffe*. Oui, madame, sans doute ; et ma ferveur est telle. . .

*Elmire*. Ouf ! vous me serrez trop.

*Tartuffe*. C'est par excès de zèle.  
De vous faire aucun mal je n'eus jamais dessein,  
Et j'aurois bien plutôt. . .

*Elmire*. Que fait là votre main ?

*Tartuffe*. Je tâte votre habit : l'étoffe en est moelleuse.

*Elmire*. Ah ! de grace, laissez, je suis fort chatouilleuse.

*Tartuffe* (*maniant le fichu d'Elmire*). Mon Dieu ! que de ce point l'ouvrage est merveilleux !

On travaille aujourd'hui d'un air miraculeux :  
Jamais, en tout chose, on n'a vu si bien faire.

*Elmire*. Il est vrai. Mais parlons un peu de notre affaire.  
On tient que mon mari veut dégager sa foi,  
Et vous donner sa fille. Est-il vrai ? dites-moi.

*Tartuffe*. Il m'en a dit dit deux mots : mais, madame, à vrai dire,  
Ce n'est pas le bonheur après quoi je soupire ;  
Et je vois autre part les merveilleux attraits  
De la félicité qui fait tous mes souhaits.

*Elmire*. C'est que vous n'aimez rien des choses de la terre.

*Tartuffe*. Mon sein n'enferme pas un cœur qui soit de pierre.

*Elmire*. Pour moi, je crois qu'au ciel tendent tous vos soupirs,  
Et que rien ici-bas n'arrête vos désirs.

*Tartuffe*. L'amour qui nous attache aux beautés éternelles

play. It was prohibited in 1664 ; and some zealous clergymen even went so far as to write treatises which they hoped

N'étouffe pas en nous l'amour des temporelles :  
 Nos sens facilement peuvent être charmés  
 Des ouvrages parfaits que le ciel a formés.  
 Ses attraits réfléchis brillent dans vos pareilles ;  
 Mais il étale en vous ses plus rares merveilles :  
 Il a sur votre face épanché des beautés  
 Dont les yeux sont surpris, et les cœurs transportés ;  
 Et je n'ai pu vous voir, parfaite créature,  
 Sans admirer en vous l'auteur de la nature,  
 Et d'une ardente amour sentir mon cœur atteint,  
 Au plus beau des portraits où lui-même il s'est peint.  
 D'abord j'appréhendai que cette ardeur secrète  
 Ne fût du noir esprit une surprise adroite ;  
 Et même à fuir vos yeux mon cœur se résolut,  
 Vous croyant un obstacle à faire mon salut.  
 Mais enfin je connus, ô beauté tout aimable,  
 Que cette passion peut n'être point coupable,  
 Que je puis l'ajuster avecque la pudeur,  
 Et c'est ce qui m'y fait abandonner mon cœur.  
 Ce m'est, je le confesse, une audace bien grande  
 Que d'oser de ce cœur vous adresser l'offrande ;  
 Mais j'attends en mes vœux tout de votre bonté,  
 Et rien des vains efforts de mon infirmité.  
 En vous est mon espoir, mon bien, ma quiétude ;  
 De vous dépend ma peine ou ma béatitude ;  
 Et je vais être enfin, par votre seul arrêt,  
 Heureux, si vous voulez ; malheureux, s'il vous plaît.

*Elmire.*

La déclaration est tout à fait galante ;  
 Mais elle est, à vrai dire, un peu bien surprenante.  
 Vous deviez, ce me semble, armer mieux votre sein,  
 Et raisonner un peu sur un pareil dessein.  
 Un dévot comme vous, et que partout on nomme . . .

*Tartuffe.*

Ah ! pour être dévot, je n'en suis pas moins homme :  
 Et, lorsqu'on vient à voir vos célestes appas,  
 Un cœur se laisse prendre, et ne raisonne pas.  
 Je sais qu'un tel discours de moi paroît étrange :  
 Mais, madame, après tout, je ne suis pas un ange ;  
 Et, si vous condamnez l'aveu que je vous fais,  
 Vous devez vous en prendre à vos charmants attraits  
 Dès que j'en vis briller la splendeur plus qu'humaine,  
 De mon intérieur vous fûtes souveraine ;  
 De vos regards divins l'ineffable douceur  
 Força la résistance ou s'obstinait mon cœur ;  
 Elle surmonta tout, jeûnes, prières, larmes,

would counteract the effects of the dramatist's works. For their own sakes we may hope that they did not succeed.

Et tourna tous mes vœux du côté de vos charmes.  
 Mes yeux et mes soupirs vous l'ont dit mille fois ;  
 Et, pour mieux m'expliquer, j'emploie ici la voix.  
 Que si vous contemplez, d'une ame un peu bénigne,  
 Les tribulations de votre esclave indigne ;  
 S'il faut que vos bontés veuillent me consoler,  
 Et jusqu'à mon néant daignent se ravalier,  
 J'aurai toujours pour vous, ô suave merveille,  
 Une dévotion à nulle autre pareille.  
 Votre honneur avec moi ne court point de hasard,  
 Et n'a nulle disgrâce à craindre de ma part.  
 Tous ces galants de cour, dont les femmes sont folles,  
 Sont bruyants dans leurs faits et vains dans leurs paroles ;  
 De leurs progrès sans cesse on les voit se targuer ;  
 Ils n'ont point de faveurs qu'ils n'aillent divulguer ;  
 Et leur langue indiscreète, en qui l'on se confie,  
 Déshonore l'autel où leur cœur sacrifie.  
 Mais les gens comme nous brûlent d'un feu discret,  
 Avec qui, pour toujours, on est sûr du secret.  
 Le soin que nous prenons de notre renommée  
 Répond de toute chose à la personne aimée ;  
 Et c'est en nous qu'on trouve, acceptant notre cœur,  
 De l'amour sans scandale, et du plaisir sans peur.

*Elmire.* Je vous écoute dire, et votre rhétorique  
 En termes assez forts à mon ame s'explique.  
 N'appréhendez-vous point que je ne sois d'humeur  
 A dire à mon mari cette galante ardeur,  
 Et que le prompt avis d'un amour de la sorte  
 Ne pût bien altérer l'amitié qu'il vous porte ?

*Tartuffe.* Je sais que vous avez trop de bénignité,  
 Et que vous ferez grace à ma témérité ;  
 Que vous m'excuserez, sur l'humaine foiblesse,  
 Des violents transports d'un amour qui vous blesse,  
 Et considérez, en regardant votre air,  
 Que l'on n'est pas aveugle, et qu'un homme est de *chair*.

*Elmire.* D'autres prendroient cela d'autre façon peut-être ;  
 Mais ma discrétion se veut faire paroître.  
 Je ne redirai point l'affaire à mon époux ;  
 Mais je veux, en revanche, une chose de vous :  
 C'est de presser tout franc, et sans nulle chicane,  
 L'union de Valère avecque Mariane,  
 De renoncer vous-même à l'injuste pouvoir  
 Qui veut du bien d'un autre enrichir votre espoir."

The king was not strong enough to withstand the influence of the clergy, and did not venture at once to remove the interdict. The relaxation did not take place until five years later. But it was at this time that Louis XIV. bestowed on Molière's company the name of *Comédiens du Roi*; and the troop was subsidised by a yearly pension of seven thousand livres.

*Don Juan ou le Festin de Pierre*, a piece in which a nobleman, who is a libertine as well as a sceptic and a hypocrite, is brought upon the stage, was first acted in February 1665, and raised such an outcry that it was also forbidden to be played. In spite of failing health and serious depression of spirits, Molière continued to produce play after play; and some of his best and most admired were the fruits of his most unhappy moments. Early in the year 1662 he had married Armande Béjart, the youngest sister of Madeleine Béjart, who was about twenty years younger than her husband. It was apparently a marriage of mutual affection; but it can hardly be said to have been a fortunate one for either. Armande loved admiration from whatever source, and indulged in pleasures which her husband could not share. The breach between them gradually widened, and it was not till 1671 that their friends brought about a better understanding between them. Meanwhile, in September 1665, appeared *L'Amour Médecin*, a comedy in three acts, in which a lover appears disguised as a physician, to cure the object of his love, who pretends to be dumb, and in which Molière makes his first serious attack against the doctors. It was only acted a few times when the theatre had to be closed on account of the author's illness; and the death of Anne of Austria in the spring of 1666 delayed its reopening until June of that year. It was then that the *Misanthrope* was introduced to the public—a play which has been ranked as high in comedy as *Athalie* is ranked in French tragedy. The circumstances under which



it was written were such as might almost warrant us in calling it a tragedy; for the great satirist, who had spent his life in copying the eccentricities of others, had now employed the season of his illness to commit to paper a drama in which he was himself the principal actor. The misanthrope Alceste loves the coquette Célimène, almost against his will; and we can imagine the feelings with which Molière himself took the rôle of Alceste to his wife's Célimène. Let us give one scene,<sup>1</sup> in which the workings of love and jealousy are finely shown:—

*Alceste.* O Heaven! how can I control here my passion?

*Célimène (aside).* Ah! (*to Alceste*) What's this trouble which you clearly show?

And what's the meaning of those long-drawn sighs,  
And those black looks which you direct upon me?

*Alceste.* That all the horrid deeds one can conceive  
Will not compare to your perfidious conduct;  
That neither fate, nor hell, nor heaven in wrath  
Has e'er produced a thing so false as you are.

*Célimène.* These pretty things I surely much admire.

*Alceste.* Ah! do not jest, this is no time for laughing.  
Indeed blush rather; for you've cause to do so!  
And of your treachery I've the clearest proofs.  
That's what the emotions of my heart forebode;  
'Twas not in vain my love was seized with fear;  
You thought it odious when I oft suspected,  
And sought that evil which my eyes have seen;  
Spite all your care and your deceitful skill,  
My star foretold me what I had to fear;  
But don't imagine that, without revenge,  
I'll bear the slight of being thus insulted.  
I know we cannot rule our inclinations;  
That love spontaneously springs everywhere;  
That there's no entering a heart by force,

<sup>1</sup> *The Misanthrope*, Act iv. scene 3. Part of this scene Molière had already used in *Don Garcie de Navarre*.

And that each soul may freely name its victor ;  
 Thus I'd no reason to complain at all,  
 If you had spoken to me openly,  
 And had disdained my love when it sprang up ;  
 My heart would then have only blamed its luck.  
 But to fan my affection by deceit,  
 Is such a treachery, such perfidy,  
 That nothing I can do is too severe ;  
 And my resentment may do anything :  
 Yes, yes, dread everything for such an outrage.  
 I am beside myself ; I'm mad with rage.  
 Pierced by the deadly blow which you have dealt me  
 My senses are no longer swayed by reason ;  
 I yield to th' outbursts of a righteous wrath,  
 And do not answer what I may not do.

*Célimène.* Whence comes, I pray you, such a fit of passion ?  
 Tell me, are all your senses wholly gone ?

*Alceste.* Yes, yes, I lost them when I first beheld you,  
 And thus, to my misfortune, took the poison,  
 And when I thought to find sincerity  
 In those deceitful charms that have bewitched me.

*Célimène.* And of what treach'ry have you to complain ?

*Alceste.* Ah ! what deceit ! how well she can dissemble !  
 But, to confound her, I've the means at hand,  
 Cast your eyes here, and recognise your writing ;  
 This picked-up note suffices to condemn you,  
 And such proof cannot lightly be refuted . . .

*Célimène.* If this note to a woman be addressed,  
 How can it hurt you, and where is the guilt ?

*Alceste.* Ah ! this is good, the excuse is marvellous.  
 I must confess this turn is unexpected,  
 And now I am convinced, and wholly so.  
 Dare you employ such ordinary tricks ?  
 And do you think me so bereft of sense ?  
 Come, let us hear how far, and with what air,  
 You will support so palpable a falsehood ;  
 And how you can apply to any woman  
 Those loving words found in this very note ?

Explain away, to hide your broken vows,  
What I will read. . .

*Célimène.*

It does not suit me now.

'Tis most ridiculous to lord it thus,  
And to my face say what you dare to me !

*Alceste.*

No, don't fly in a rage, but take some pains,  
To justify the words which I see here.

*Célimène.*

No, I shall not act thus ; on this occasion  
It matters nought to me what you believe.

*Alceste.*

Pray, show me, and I shall be satisfied,  
If this note can be meant for any woman.

*Célimène.*

No, it was for Oronte ; you may believe so ;  
All his attentions gladly I accept,  
I admire what he says, I like him much,  
And shall agree to whatever you please.  
Do what you will ; let nothing hinder you,  
But let my thoughts be undisturbed by you.

*Alceste*

(*aside*). O, Heavens ! can aught more cruel be conceived ?

Was e'er a heart treated in such a way ?  
What ! with just anger I am moved against her,  
I come to blame, and am myself attacked !  
My grief and my suspicions are excited,  
I credit all ; she boasts of everything ;  
And yet my heart is cowardly enough  
Not to tear off the bonds which hold it fast,  
Not to put on a generous contempt  
For the ungrateful object of its flame.

(*To Célimène.*) Ah, treacherous woman ! but too well you  
know

To take advantage of my utmost weakness,  
And to employ the excessive, fatal love,  
So wondrously born of your treach'rous eyes.  
Defend yourself from this o'erwhelming crime,  
And cease to feign that you are culpable.  
Prove, if you're able, that this note is blameless ;  
My love consents to lend a helping hand.  
Though without faith yet put its semblance on,  
And I'll endeavour to believe you such.

*Célimène.* Bah! you are mad with all these jealous frenzies,  
And don't deserve the love I have for you.  
I should much like to know what could compel me  
To stoop for you to such a base pretence;  
Why, if my heart inclined towards another,  
Should I not say so with sincerity?  
What! I avow the love I feel for you,  
Yet your suspicions are not all allayed!  
They ought to have no weight, with such a warrant.  
Does it not wrong me to attend to them?  
And since we hardly dare confess our love,  
And since our sex, hostile to lovers' passion,  
To such avowals is so much opposed,  
Should not a lover suffer who can doubt  
When such an obstacle is overcome?  
And is his guilt not clear, who is not sure  
That we speak truth, at such a bitter cost  
Go! these suspicions well deserve my anger;  
And you're not worthy I should care for you.  
I wrong myself in my simplicity,  
Still to preserve the smallest kindness for you,  
I ought elsewhere to place all my affections,  
And give you lawful cause for your complaints.

*Alceste.* Ah, traitress! strange the weakness you inspire;  
Your sweet expressions are no doubt deceptive;  
It matters not, I must accept my fate;  
My very soul is wholly wrapt in you;  
And to the very end I'll prove your heart,  
And see if it be black enough to cheat me.

*Célimène.* No, you don't love me as you ought to love.

*Alceste.* Nothing can be compared to my deep love;  
And, in its haste to show itself to all,  
It e'en forms wishes 'gainst your lovely self.  
Yes, I could wish no one to think you handsome,  
That you were plunged in abject misery;  
That Heaven had given you nothing, at your birth;  
That you had had nor rank, nor birth, nor wealth;  
So that the public proffer of my heart



Might make amends for so unjust a lot ;  
That I might then possess the joy and glory  
To see you owe it all to my affection. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Alceste (à part).* O ciel ! de mes transports puis-je être ici le maître ?

*Célimène (à part).* Ouais ! (à *Alceste*) Quel est donc le trouble où je **vous** vois paroître ?

Et que me veulent dire, et ces soupirs poussés,  
Et ces sombres regards que sur moi vous lancez ?

*Alceste.* Que toutes les horreurs dont une ame est capable  
A vos déloyautés n'ont rien de comparable ;  
Que le sort, les démons, et le ciel en courroux,  
N'ont jamais rien produit de si méchant que vous.

*Célimène.* Voilà certainement des douceurs que j'admire.

*Alceste.* Ah ! ne plaisantez point, il n'est pas temps de rire.  
Rougissez bien plutôt, vous en avez raison ;  
Et j'ai de sûrs témoins de votre trahison.  
Voilà ce que marquoient les troubles de mon ame ;  
Ce n'étoit pas en vain que s'alarmoit ma flamme ;  
Par ces fréquents soupçons qu'on trouvoit odieux,  
Je cherchois le malheur qu'ont rencontré mes yeux ;  
Et, malgré tous vos soins et votre adresse à feindre,  
Mon astre me disoit ce que j'avois à craindre  
Mais ne présumez pas que, sans être vengé,  
Je souffre le dépit de me voir outragé.  
Je sais que sur les vœux on n'a point de puissance,  
Que l'amour veut partout naître sans dépendance,  
Que jamais par la force on n'entra dans un cœur,  
Et que toute ame est libre à nommer son vainqueur.  
Aussi ne trouverois-je aucun sujet de plainte,  
Si pour moi votre bouche avoit parlé sans feinte ;  
Et, rejetant mes vœux dès le premier abord,  
Mon cœur n'auroit eu droit de s'en prendre qu'au sort.  
Mais d'un aveu trompeur voir ma flamme applaudie,  
C'est une trahison, c'est une perfidie,  
Qui ne sauroit trouver de trop grands châtimens ;  
Et je puis tout permettre à mes ressentimens.  
Oui, oui, redoutez tout après un tel outrage ;  
Je ne suis plus à moi, je suis tout à la rage.  
Percé du coup mortel dont vous m'assassinez,  
Mes sens par la raison ne sont plus gouvernés ;  
Je cède aux mouvemens d'une juste colère,  
Et je ne réponds pas de ce que je puis faire.

*Célimène.* D'où vient donc, je vous prie, un tel emportement ?  
Avez-vous, dites-moi, perdu le jugement ?

A second play, the *Médecin malgré Lui*, was produced in 1666, and the pretty operetta of the *Sicilien* followed early in the next year. An abortive attempt was made to re-introduce

*Alceste.* Oui, oui, je l'ai perdu, lorsque dans votre vue  
J'ai pris, pour mon malheur, le poison qui me tue,  
Et que j'ai cru trouver quelque sincérité  
Dans les traitres appas dont je fus enchanté.  
*Célimène.* De quelle trahison pouvez-vous donc vous plaindre ?  
*Alceste.* Ah ! que ce cœur est double, et sait bien l'art de feindre !  
Mais, pour le mettre à bout, j'ai des moyens tout prêts.  
Jetez ici les yeux, et connoissez vos traits ;  
Ce billet découvert suffit pour vous confondre,  
Et contre ce témoin on n'a rien à répondre.

*Célimène.* Mais si c'est une femme à qui va ce billet,  
En quoi vous blesse-t-il, et qu'a-t-il de coupable ?

*Alceste.* Ah ! le détour est bon, et l'excuse admirable.  
Je ne m'attendois pas, je l'avoue, à ce trait  
Et me voilà par là convaincu tout à fait.  
Osez-vous recourir à ces ruses grossières ?  
Et croyez-vous les gens si privés de lumières ?  
Voyons, voyons, un peu par quel biais, de quel air,  
Vous voulez soutenir un mensonge si clair ;  
Et comment vous pourrez tourner pour une femme,  
Tous les mots d'un billet qui montre tant de flamme.  
Ajustez, pour couvrir un manquement de foi,  
Ce que je m'en vais lire. . . .

*Célimène.* Il ne me plaît pas, moi.  
Je vous trouve plaisant d'user d'un tel empire  
Et de me dire au nez ce que vous m'osez dire !

*Alceste.* Non, non, sans s'emporter, prenez un peu souci  
De me justifier les termes que voici.

*Célimène.* Non, je n'en veux rien faire ; et, dans cette occurrence,  
Tout ce que vous croirez m'est de peu d'importance.

*Alceste.* De grace, montrez-moi, je serai satisfait,  
Qu'on peut, pour une femme, expliquer ce billet.

*Célimène.* Non, il est pour Oronte ; et je veux qu'on le croie.  
Je reçois tous ses soins avec beaucoup de joie,  
J'admire ce qu'il dit, j'estime ce qu'il est,  
Et je tombe d'accord de tout ce qu'il vous plaît.  
Faites, prenez parti ; que rien ne vous arrête,  
Et ne me rompez pas davantage la tête.

*Alceste (à part).* Ciel ! rien de plus cruel peut-il être inventé,  
Et jamais cœur fut-il de la sorte traité !  
Quoi ! d'un juste courroux je suis ému contre elle,  
C'est moi qui me viens plaindre, et c'est moi qu'on querelle !

*Tartuffe* in 1667, during the absence of Louis on his Flanders campaign, but it ended in a renewed prohibition. *Amphitryon*, which has the gross plot of a wife mistaking Jupiter for her

On pousse ma douleur et mes soupçons à bout,  
On me laisse tout croire, on fait gloire de tout ;  
Et cependant mon cœur est encore assez lâche  
Pour ne pouvoir briser la chaîne qui l'attache,  
Et pour ne pas s'armer d'un généreux mépris  
Contre l'ingrat objet dont il est trop épris !  
Ah ! (*à Célimène*) que vous savez bien ici contre moi-même,  
Perfide, vous servir de ma foiblesse extrême,  
Et ménager pour vous l'excès prodigieux  
De ce fatal amour né de vos traîtres yeux !  
Défendez-vous au moins d'un crime qui m'accable,  
Et cessez d'affecter d'être envers moi coupable.  
Rendez-moi, s'il se peut, ce billet innocent ;  
A vous prêter les mains ma tendresse consent.  
Efforcez-vous ici de paroître fidèle,  
Et je m'efforcerai, moi, de vous croire telle.

*Célimène.* Allez, vous êtes fou dans vos transports jaloux,  
Et ne méritez pas l'amour qu'on a pour vous.  
Je voudrois bien savoir qui pourroit me contraindre  
A descendre pour vous aux bassesses de feindre ;  
Et pourquoi, si mon cœur penchoit d'autre côté,  
Je ne le dirois pas avec sincérité !  
Quoi ! de mes sentiments l'obligeante assurance  
Contre tous vos soupçons ne prend pas ma défense ?  
Auprès d'un tel garant sont-ils de quelque poids ?  
N'est-ce pas m'outrager que d'écouter leur voix ?  
Et puisque notre cœur fait un effort extrême  
Lorsqu'il peut se résoudre à confesser qu'il aime ;  
Puisque l'honneur du sexe, ennemi de nos feux,  
S'oppose fortement à de pareils aveux,  
L'amant qui voit pour lui franchir un tel obstacle  
Doit-il impunément douter de cet oracle ?  
Et n'est-il pas coupable, en ne s'assurant pas  
A ce qu'on ne dit point qu'après de grands combats ?  
Allez, de tels soupçons méritent ma colère ;  
Et vous ne valez pas que l'on vous considère.  
Je suis sotte, et veux mal à ma simplicité  
De conserver encor pour vous quelque bonté ;  
Je devrois autre part attacher mon estime,  
Et vous faire un sujet de plainte légitime.

*Alceste.* Ah ! traîtresse ! mon foible est étrange pour vous ;  
Vous me trompez, sans doute, avec des mots si doux ;

husband ; *George Dandin*, which shows the danger of a commoner marrying a lady of noble birth, and in which I strongly suspect Molière gave vent to some of his feelings about his wife, though putting them purposely in the mouth of a ridiculous personage ; and *l'Avare*, based on Plautus, in which the frightful consequences of avarice, and its dissolving influences on family bonds, are exposed, successively occupied the stage in 1668. In the following year the king, growing more independent of his advisers, sanctioned the production of *Tartuffe* ; but this strengthening of his repertory did not prevent Molière producing *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, a farcical comedy in three acts, in which there is a masterly and not exaggerated sketch of a consultation of doctors in Molière's time ; and, in 1670, the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, in which the folly of aping noblemen is delineated, as well as the *Amants Magnifiques*, a comedy-ballet for the particular behoof of the court. In 1671 he combined with Corneille and Quinault in the production of *Psyché*, a tragedy-ballet, and wrote, or rather, perhaps, remodelled from amongst his earlier efforts, the *Fourberies de Scapin* and the *Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*. His two last works were amongst the highest and happiest creations of his genius—the *Femmes Savantes*, a sort

Mais il n'importe, il faut suivre ma destinée ;  
 A votre foi mon ame est tout abandonnée ;  
 Je veux voir jusqu'au bout quel sera votre cœur,  
 Et si de me trahir il aura la noirceur.

*Célimène.* Non, vous ne m'aimez point comme il faut que l'on aime.

*Alceste.* Ah ! rien n'est comparable à mon amour extrême ;  
 Et dans l'ardeur qu'il a de se montrer à tous,  
 Il va jusqu'à former des souhaits contre vous.  
 Oui, je voudrois qu'aucun ne vous trouvât aimable,  
 Que vous fussiez réduite en un sort misérable ;  
 Que le ciel en naissant ne vous eût donné rien ;  
 Que vous n'eussiez ni rang, ni naissance, ni bien ;  
 Afin que de mon cœur l'éclatant sacrifice  
 Vous pût d'un pareil sort réparer l'injustice ;  
 Et que j'eusse la joie et la gloire en ce jour  
 De vous voir tenir tout des mains de mon amour.



of sequel to the *Précieuses Ridicules*, though of a more general application, and the *Malade Imaginaire*. In the latter, he insisted on playing the part of Argan upon the first representation, on the 10th of February 1673 ; but it was the crowning act of his energetic mind. He became ill during the fourth representation of the play, and died that same evening, the 17th of February, exactly one year after Madeleine Béjart, with whom, seven-and-twenty years ago, he had set out from Paris with little more ambition than that of earning a livelihood by the pursuit of a congenial career.

Molière placed upon the stage nearly all human passions which lend themselves to comedy or farce. Sordid avarice, lavish prodigality, shameless vice, womanly resignation, artless coquetry, greed for money, downright hypocrisy, would-be gentility, self-sufficient vanity, fashionable swindling, misanthropy, heartlessness, plain common sense, knowledge of the world, coarse jealousy, irresolution, impudence, pride of birth, egotism, self-conceit, pusillanimity, ingenuity, roguery, affectation, homeliness, thoughtlessness, pedantry, arrogance, and many more faults and vices, find their representatives. The language which they employ is always natural to them, and is neither too gross nor over-refined. His verse has none of the stiffness of the ordinary French rhyme, and becomes in his hands, as well as his prose, a delightful medium for sparkling sallies, bitter sarcasms, and well-sustained and sprightly conversations. And how remarkable and delicate is the *nuance* between his different characters, though they may represent the same profession or an identical personage. None of his doctors are alike ; his male and female scholars are all dissimilar. Mascarille is not Gros-Réné, Scapin is not Sbrigani, Don Juan is not Dorante, Alceste is not Philinte, Isabelle is not Agnes, Sganarelle is not always the same, Ariste is not Béralde nor Chrysalde ; whilst even his servants, Nicole, Dorine, Martine,

Marotte, Toinette, Claudine, and Lisette ; his boobies, such as Alain and Lubin ; and his intriguants in petticoats, such as Nérine, Lucette, Frosine, vary in character, expression, and conduct. They exemplify the saying "Like master, like man." A remarkable characteristic of Molière is<sup>1</sup> that he does not exaggerate ; his fools are never over witty, his buffoons too grotesque, his men of wit too anxious to display their smartness, and his fine gentlemen too fond of immodest and ribald talk. His satire is always kept within bounds, his repartees are never out of place, his plots are but seldom intricate, and the moral of his plays is not obtruded, but follows as a natural consequence of the whole. He rarely rises to those lofty realms of poetry where Shakspeare so often soars, for he wrote not idealistic but character comedies ; which is, perhaps, the reason that some of his would-be admirers consider him rather commonplace. His claim to distinction is based only on strong common sense, good manners, sound morality, real wit, true humour, a great, facile, and accurate command of language, and a photographic delineation of nature. It cannot be denied that there is little action in his plays, but there is a great deal of natural conversation ; his personages show that he was a most attentive observer of men, even at court, where a certain varnish of over-refinement conceals nearly all individual features. He generally makes vice appear in its most ridiculous aspect, in order to let his audience laugh and despise it ; his aim is to correct the follies of the age by exposing them to ridicule. Shakspeare, on the contrary, has no lack of incidents ; he roves through camp, and court, and grove, through solitary forests and populous cities ; he sketches in broad outlines rather than with minute strokes ; he defines classes rather than individuals, and instead of portraying petty vanities

<sup>1</sup> I avail myself of what I have already said on the same subject in the Preface of my translation of the *Dramatic Works* of Molière.

and human foibles, prefers to deal with deep and tumultuous passions, to such an extent that some of his comedies are highly dramatic. But both poets are great, and, perhaps, unsurpassed in their own way.

### § 3. LA FONTAINE.

Amongst the friends of Molière was one who deserves to be mentioned immediately after him, as well on other grounds as because he was a fellow-dramatist, a writer or at least a *collaborateur* of comedies of no mean merit.<sup>1</sup> Jean de La Fontaine<sup>2</sup> is better known as the author of fables and licentious tales in verse than as a worker for the stage; but yet the original bent of his mind seems to me to have been for dramatic literature, and even at an early age he wrote an imitation in verse of the *Eunuch* of Terence. A native of Chateau-Thierry in Champagne, attached to Fouquet by ties of affection and gratitude, he showed the strength of the latter feeling by pleading the cause of the disgraced *surintendant*, writing an elegy on his behalf addressed to *the Nymphs of Vaux*, and an *Ode to the King*, in the year 1663. Next year he published a collection of *Tales*, and seven years later a series of *Nouvelles*, the subjects whereof were taken principally from Boccaccio. It was in 1668, when he was forty-seven years old, that he issued the first collection of his *Fables*, and six more appeared between the years 1671 and 1694; the last and perhaps the weakest, only a year before his death. In the meanwhile he had written three mythological poems—the *loves of Psyché*, *Adonis*, and *Philemon and Baucis* the most natural of the three. Amongst his comedies the judgment

<sup>1</sup> It is said that M. Champmeslé wrote them, and that La Fontaine assisted him.

<sup>2</sup> 1621-1695.

of the later times has declared in favour of the *Enchanted Cup*, which is still, or was until lately, in the repertory of the Théâtre Français.

La Fontaine was a firm friend and a generous appreciator of the talent of others. For no one amongst his contemporaries was his friendship warmer than for Molière; and its fervour was heightened by a deep and lasting admiration of his rival's works. One familiar expression of the poet's has been preserved which speaks more than a dozen pages of eulogy: "Molière is the man for me."<sup>1</sup> The friendship was reciprocated on the part of Molière; and indeed there was much in common, if not in the character, at least in the genius of these two men, which made their friendship both natural and enduring. The luminous simplicity of their art, which seemed with the lightest touch, almost without an effort, to unfold the intricacies of human nature, and to lay bare the secrets of the human heart, was as conspicuous in one as in the other; and it was but slightly that the outer manifestations of their power differed in form and texture. In their personal characters no doubt they were much at variance. La Fontaine was eminently indifferent, Molière was eminently ambitious for his reputation. The one was slipshod in habits; the other was more or less precise in all that he undertook. The first was always poor, or at least improvident, but always contented; the second never rested till he was out of debt, and loved to be surrounded by the elegancies of life. La Fontaine was not devoid of malice, and never made an enemy; Molière had many enemies, but rarely gave personal offence before he was attacked. La Fontaine deserted his wife, neglected his children, was brusque to his friends; Molière's conjugal affection was only too exacting, and his disposition was genuinely benevolent, finally La Fontaine had absolutely no notion of moral or

<sup>1</sup> Molière, c'est mon homme



social duties, whilst Molière possessed these feelings pre-eminently.

With all his irregularities, all the bluntness and the petulance which must have been occasionally so trying for his friends, La Fontaine was the spoiled child of his age, which could not see or take offence at his sins. He was as improvident as Rutebeuf, as unable to take care of himself as Coleridge; and he ingenuously sponged on one patron or patroness after another. Fouquet we have already mentioned. The Duchess de Bouillon, at whose request he wrote his first tales, and the widowed Duchess of Orleans, were his patronesses. Madame de la Sablière, at whose house he lived for nearly twenty years, was another. It was she who, resigning the pleasures of society, wrote: "I have dismissed all my people, except my dog, my cat, and La Fontaine." She had influence enough to secure his election to the Academy, even when Boileau was a candidate; but our poet had to buy himself in at the price of a few fulsome and flattering odes to the king. When Madame de la Sablière died, Hervant, an old friend, hurried to offer him an asylum. He met La Fontaine weeping in the street, and bade him return with him. "I was on my way to come to you," said the poet. When La Fontaine himself passed away—which he did filled with repentance induced by sickness and old age—his nurse said, "*Dieu n'aura jamais le courage de le damner*," and Bishop Fénelon, on hearing of his death, wrote a Latin theme, which he gave to translate to his pupil, the youthful Duke of Burgundy, grandson of Louis XIV., and in which he said almost the same thing in another form. "Read him," he says in a fervid eulogy, "and say if Anacreon could jest more gracefully; if Horace has dressed his philosophy in more poetic and attractive adornments; if Terence has painted the manners of men with greater naturalness and truth." Le Brun wrote his epitaph in a spirit which is undoubtedly in

harmony with the feelings of the bulk of his fellow-countrymen.<sup>1</sup>

In his character he was an exaggeration of the *esprit gaulois*. Taking nothing for serious, not even passion, but looking for enjoyment and amusement everywhere, considering love as a good thing to wile away an idle hour, but not as an intoxication ; being the more attracted in plucking a fruit, because it is forbidden, and looking upon life in preference as a laughing matter, that part of the *esprit gaulois* La Fontaine has delineated in his *Fables*. In his *Fables* he shows another, and if not a better, at least a very superior literary man. He is there the worthy rival of Molière in delicacy and accurate power of observation, in dramatic force, simplicity of style, and influence on his readers. In all his works he is a true poet, often apt to forget himself, and even sometimes his dignity, only caring for the subject that occupies his thoughts for the time—now being filled with Plato, another time with the prophet Baruch, again with Malherbe and Racan, of whom he speaks more than once with hyperbolic praise, placing them “amongst the angels, chaunting on high the praise of the Eternal,”<sup>2</sup> and to whom he refers as “rivals of Horace, heirs of his lyre, disciples of Apollo, or rather our masters.”<sup>3</sup> In the *Fables* he attempts to depict the whole of human life. They form the true epic French poem, and France has no other. La Fontaine is the French Homer, for he is as universal, idealistic, and natural as the Greek.<sup>4</sup> He is easy to understand, for he does not fatigue, and skims

<sup>1</sup> “Qu’un petit docteur au front chauve  
Dise que les jeux sont maudits ;  
Je n’en crois rien : si l’esprit sauve  
La Fontaine est en Paradis.”

<sup>2</sup> A letter to Huet. See bk. iv., ch. 3, p. 65, note 1.   <sup>3</sup> *Fables*, bk. iii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See H. A. Taine, *La Fontaine et ses fables*, 1861, p. 49 *et passim*. I am happy to acknowledge here my obligations to this literary critic, whom I have partly followed in his reasonings and deductions in my study of our author.

everything, even sentiments. Sometimes he is serious, sometimes ironical, sometimes innocent, or philosophical, but he is always making fun of some one or of something. As a moralist he is neither severe nor indignant, but teaches that man should not be a fool, should learn to know life, and become neither the dupe of others nor of himself. He depicts the world as it is, says that to "suffer is better than to die," that "our master is our enemy," and utters a great many similar maxims. He praises even political treachery. "The wise man says, according to the people whom he has to deal with: 'Long live the King! long live the League!'"<sup>1</sup> He glorifies four times in prose and in verse the revocation of the edict of Nantes, for "Louis has banished from France the heretical and very foolish brood;" and because the Pope does not admire this revocation, La Fontaine tells him that he is "neither holy nor Father, and that our triumph over error only causes his anger against the eldest of his children to increase."<sup>2</sup> When Vendôme feels some scruples about the laying waste of the Palatinate, our poet asks, "Should we have gentler guests if the Germans came to us?"<sup>3</sup> As a writer, his only creed appears to be "Let us live and be merry," and this he preaches with a persistency worthy of a better cause, and in a style so natural and easy, that he was and is still more popular with the French than any other writer.

And does not La Fontaine describe his animals well and caustically? They are men or women disguised as animals, but still having the characteristics of both. The

<sup>1</sup> M. Taine observes on this, "This is the morality of the poor, the oppressed, in one word of the *subject*. We have no longer the word, but we have still the thing. . . . This state of things has hardly changed, and the maxims which spring from it have not changed either. Except a select few, the French have stopped at La Fontaine's morality."

<sup>2</sup> The king of France was called "the eldest son of the Church."

<sup>3</sup> Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-septième siècle*, p. 223.

king lion, for example, is like another Louis XIV.: he is never loud, "cries are unbecoming to the sovereign majesty;"<sup>1</sup> he is kindly disposed, "when he has well dined;" he may get "bored,"<sup>2</sup> but "he does not want chatter-boxes at court."<sup>3</sup> He holds "open court," and behaves right royally, and does not even deign to apply "his sacred nails" upon a wretched animal who has offended the queen, but leaves him to the vengeance of the inferior beings, the wolves."<sup>4</sup> When misfortunes overwhelm the State the lion proposes that they should sacrifice the most guilty animal, and confesses that he has eaten "many sheep, and even sometimes the shepherd;" the fox declares that the king has "done them too much honour," and of course the harmless donkey, who had only nibbled a few blades of grass, is declared the most culpable and slain on the spot. But our monarch has his moments of noble feeling, and when the rat by accident comes between the paws of the lion, he gives him his life. Finally, when the king of animals, broken down by age, sad and gloomy, and being hardly able to roar, awaits his destiny without complaining,<sup>5</sup> it reminds us of Saint Simon forgetting all the evil done by Louis XIV. on beholding the calmness of the aged monarch assailed by misfortunes.

After the king come the courtiers, and the fox appears to be the most accomplished of them. When the lion is ill, and the fox is unfortunately absent, "the wolf attacks his friend behind his back, at the king's couchée."<sup>6</sup> But when the next

<sup>1</sup> "Les cris sont indécents à la majesté souveraine."

<sup>2</sup> "Le maître des dieux assez, souvent s'ennuie."

<sup>3</sup> "Je n'ai que faire d'une babillarde à ma cour."

<sup>4</sup> "Nous n'appliquerons pas . . . nos sacrés ongles. Venez, loups, vengez la reine."

<sup>5</sup> "Le malheureux lion, languissant, triste et morne,  
Peut à peine rugir, par l'âge estropié,  
Il attend son destin sans faire aucunes plaintes."

*Fables*, bk. iii. 14.

<sup>6</sup> "Le loup . . . daube au coucher du roi son camarade absent."—*Ib*  
bk. viii. 3.



morning Reynard makes his appearance, he quietly declares that he had gone on a pilgrimage to pray for the king's health, and that he has brought with him a consultation of some "learned and skilled" doctors, who advise that "the skin of a wolf flayed alive, should be applied whilst quite warm and smoking," and then turning politely to his fellow-courtier he says, "Master Wolf will serve you, if you please, as a dressing gown."<sup>1</sup> Needless to say that the proposed remedy was tried. And so he sneaks through life, like a true courtier, never at a loss for an excuse, nor for an expedient, proud with his superiors and cringing with his inferiors.

Other noblemen appear: the heavy elephant, the rustic bear, the lordly and haughty dog who considers the collar round his neck as "a trifle," the long-legged skinny and proud heron; and all these animals behave as insolently as the real noblemen of Louis XIV.'s court. We must also not forget the *curé* Jean Chouart, who goes "gaily behind a body" at a funeral, and counts on the money which he shall receive for his prayers to buy a "cask of the best wine;" the hermit, a rat who having taken refuge in a Dutch cheese, answers the deputies of his nation who begged for some assistance because their capital, Ratapolis, was besieged: "The things here below do not concern me any longer; in what can a poor recluse be of any assistance to you? What else can he do but pray heaven that it may aid you in this?"<sup>2</sup> And the devout cat, who, caught in a net when he was going to say his prayers, is freed by a rat, who gnaws through one of the meshes, which

<sup>1</sup> "D'un loup écorché vif appliquez-vous la peau  
Toute chaude et toute fumante. . .  
Messire loup vous servira,  
S'il vous plaît, de robe de chambre."—*Fables*, bk. viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Les choses d'ici-bas ne me regardent plus,  
En quoi peut un pauvre reclus  
Vous assister? Que peut-il faire  
Que de prier le ciel qu'il vous aide en ceci." . .

*Ibid.* bk. vii. 3.

so rejoices pious pussy that he wishes to embrace his deliverer, exclaiming, "Do you think I have forgotten that after God I owe you my life?"<sup>1</sup>

Now we have arrived at the citizens, and La Fontaine, who seems like one of them when he jeers at the nobles, seems a noble when he makes fun of the citizens. Here is the burgomaster: "Master rat, who had boasted a hundred times that he feared neither male nor female cat . . . wishing to assist a mouse, hastens, and arrives" quite out of breath "to consult the other rats. They, pot-valiant, call to arms;" in vain their spouses shed tears, each puts a piece of cheese in his bag,<sup>2</sup> and valiantly marches to meet the cat, who appears holding the mouse, and spitting. Immediately all the rats retire and "beat a happy retreat." So, when Master Cormorant, old and decrepit, can no longer go and catch fish, he tells his gossip, the crayfish, to inform the fishes that the master will come and net the pond within eight days, and that they will all be caught then. "Great is the hubbub, the people run, meet, send deputations to the bird." "My Lord Cormorant, whence have you this piece of news? Who told it you? Are you sure of it? Can you advise us? and what is the best thing to do?"<sup>3</sup> He carefully helps them all out of the pond, puts them by for a rainy day, and gobbles them

<sup>1</sup> "Penses-tu que j'aie oublié  
Qu'après Dieu je te dois la vie?"

*Fables*, bk. viii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> "Il arrive . . . les poumons essoufflés. . .  
Chacun dit. . . Sus! sus! courons aux armes!  
Quelques rates, dit on, répandirent des larmes. . .  
Chacun met dans son sac un morceau de fromage."

*Ibid.* bk. xii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> "Grande est l'émeute.  
On court, on s'assemble, on députe  
A l'oiseau: 'Seigneur Cormoran,  
D'où vous-vient cet avis? Quel est votre garant?  
Etes-vous sûr de cette affaire?  
N'y savez vous remède? et qu'est-il bon de faire!'"

*Ibid.* bk. x. 14.

up at his leisure. If these good burghers do not deserve pity they deserve ridicule, because they imagine that "the whole world turned upon the interests of four wretched marshes."<sup>1</sup> When Jupiter sends them a good king they become insolent, and so they get a crane, who eats them. These citizens have already the notion of equality; the rat is as good as an elephant, until the cat shows him the contrary;<sup>2</sup> the mule is always boasting of his mother the mare;<sup>3</sup> the ass prides himself on his excellence in speaking and singing;<sup>4</sup> another donkey wishes to imitate a little dog, a gentleman;<sup>5</sup> a rat accepts a sudden invitation of a frog, and only wishes to eat a good dinner.<sup>6</sup> A great many more citizen-vices are depicted; for example the ant, careful, economical, discreet, who on being applied to for a loan by a poet, the cricket, replies by asking what the improvident animal has done during the summer, and on hearing that it has been singing, answers, "You were singing! I am very glad to hear that; well, you may dance now!"<sup>7</sup>

And thus La Fontaine goes on, having his fling at the lawyers, the doctors, the teachers, and the shopkeepers, always using the appropriate technical phrases, and never missing to put "the right word in the right place." Then he sketches the tillers of the soil, not as fancy painted them, but as they really are, or rather were in the glorious reign of Louis

<sup>1</sup> "À les ouïr, tout le monde. . .

Roulait sur les intérêts

De quatre méchants marais."—*Fables*, bk. xii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> "Le chat . . .

Lui fit voir en moins d'un instant

Qu'un rat n'est pas un éléphant."—*Ibid.* bk. viii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> "Le mulet . . . ne parlait incessamment

Que de sa mère la jument."—*Ibid.* bk. vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* bk. xi. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* bk. iv. 4.

<sup>6</sup> "Une grenouille approche et lui dit en sa langue

'Venez-me voir chez moi, je vous ferai festin.'

Messire rat promit soudain."—*Ibid.* bk. iv. 11.

<sup>7</sup> "Vous chantiez, j'en suis fort aise;

Eh bien! dansez maintenant."—*Ibid.* bk. i. 1.

XIV., beasts of burden, mere animals, only caring for coarse food and strong drink, repulsive and grotesque at the same time ; and the artisan, hard working but not over-respectful, and sometimes "having no bread, and never any rest, and calling upon death to release him."<sup>1</sup>

As for the animals, he really studied them and loved them, perhaps better than he did his fellow-men. I am not quite sure if he were not the only man of his age who understood them, and who had a profound and true admiration for trees, flowers, brooks, landscapes, anything and everything that belonged to nature. His description of animals always corresponds with their exterior. His lion is the true king of beasts ; his frown is terrible, his mane is imposing, and his glare kingly. Does not the fox look like a courtier, with his sharp-pointed nose, his sparkling and intelligent eyes, his nimble gait, his depredatory and cunning habits, his rich skin, and his splendid tail ? Has the cat not the appearance of a hypocrite, with his careful feline walk, his half-closed eyes, his humble countenance, his velvety skin, his flattering, purring, begging, his momentary repose, his continual self-consciousness, and his art of taking the chestnuts out of the fire without burning his paws ? The bear is the well-to-do country gentleman, with a good deal of the clodhopper in him, with magnificent teeth, big paws, and straightforward gait, showing by his liking for dainties his gentlemanly descent, and by his sombre mien and his dull skin his misanthropy and provincial sourness. The monkey is no bad representative of the travelling quack, with his continual chattering and moving about, and with his inclination for roguery. The owl is a philosopher, always sad and thoughtful, always in opposition, grumbling, and no respecter of persons, hating his fellow-creatures, and though very ugly, thinking his children "beautiful, well-made,

<sup>1</sup> "Point de pain quelquefois, et jamais de repos. . .

Il appelle la mort." *Fables*, bk. i. 16.



and pretty above all their companions.”<sup>1</sup> The cock looks an animal without mercy, with the chest of a warrior and the strut of a Bobadil, a fickle lover and a bad father, who treats his wives as a sultan and master, defending them out of pride and not out of affection. And so we might go on to prove that our author knew animals, their habits and customs, their likes and dislikes ; and give his portrait of the dove, the sheep, the wolf, the ass, whom he calls “a good creature,” if stubborn and obstinate ; but our list is already too long. He speaks of the gods as a real pagan, has the Olympus at his fingers’ ends, and makes the heathen divinities the relatives, and not seldom the companions of the brute creation.

We have already spoken of La Fontaine’s style in eulogistic terms—and no praise can be more deservedly bestowed, for he is perhaps the most finished of French poets. His tripping vivacity of metre makes him never wearisome, and his poetry never monotonous—as French poetry very often is. His pictures are perfection, his dialogue is animated, his personages are natural, and never say too much or too little ; the action of his fables never flags. Was I not therefore justified in calling La Fontaine one of the first-rate dramatists of his age ? Let us give one of his fables, *The Monkey and the Leopard*, as a specimen of his talent ; but let those who read it not forget that we cannot render the charm of his diction, which may however be studied in the original :—

“ The monkey and the leopard  
 Earned money at the fair ;  
 Each spouted on his own account ;  
 The one said : ‘ Gentlemen, my merits and fame  
 Are known in high places ; the king desired to see me,

<sup>1</sup> “ Mes petits sont mignons,  
 Beaux, bien faits et jolis sur tous leurs compagnons.”

*Fables*, bk. v. 18.

And, if I die, he means to have  
 A muff made of my skin, it is so variegated,  
 Full of spots, chequered,  
 And striped, and speckled ;  
 Variety has charms.' Of course, every one went to see him.  
 But it was soon over, and presently every one went out.  
 Then the monkey said : ' Come, I pray you,  
 Come, gentlemen, I perform a hundred tricks,  
 This diversity of which you have heard so much,  
 My neighbour leopard has it outwardly ;  
 But I have it in my mind. Your servant Gille,  
 Cousin and son-in-law of Bertrand,  
 The Pope's monkey whilst he was alive,  
 Is just now in this town  
 Arrived in three boats, on purpose to have speech with you.  
 For he speaks, as you shall hear ; he can dance and bow,  
 Do all sorts of tricks,  
 Jump through hoops ; and all for six farthings,  
 Nay, gentlemen, for one sou. If you are not satisfied,  
 We will give every man his money back at the door.'  
 The monkey was right, it is not diversity in dress  
 Which pleases me, but in the mind,  
 The one is always providing pleasant things,  
 The other, in less than an instant, wearies the lookers-on.  
 Oh, how many great lords, like the leopard,  
 Have no other talent than their dress."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Le singe avec le léopard  
 Gagnaient de l'argent à la foire.  
 Ils affichaient chacun à part.  
 L'un d'eux disait : ' Messieurs, mon mérite et ma gloire  
 Sont connus en bon lieu : le roi m'a voulu voir ;  
 Et, si je meurs, il veut avoir  
 Un manchon de ma peau : tant elle est bigarrée,  
 Pleine de taches, marquetée,  
 Et vergetée, et mouchetée.'  
 La bigarrure plaît : partant chacun le vit.  
 Mais ce fut bientôt fait, bientôt chacun sortit.  
 Le singe de sa part disait : ' Venez, de grâce,  
 Venez, messieurs : je fais cent tours de passe-passe.

## § 4. MINOR DRAMATISTS.

Amongst the plays more or less frequently acted in Paris at the time when Molière's literary career began, were those of Paul Scarron<sup>1</sup> and Georges de Scudéry. The former, ill-shaped in body and fantastic in mind, a buffoon by nature and choice, burlesqued all that he put his hands to, avoiding grave subjects and modes of treatment with an unfeigned repugnance. He turned the *Æneid* into a travesty, produced the *Typhon*, a burlesque poem, and wrote in prose perhaps the most notable of his works from a literary point of view, the *Roman Comique*, describing to the life and without exaggeration the adventures of a company of strolling players, in a style of which some early Spanish novelists furnished the best examples. He was the inaugurator of French burlesque—a name invented by his friend Sarasin<sup>2</sup> instead of the less specific *grotesque*—or rather let us say that

Cette diversité dont on vous parle tant  
 Mon voisin léopard l'a sur soi seulement ;  
 Moi je l'ai dans l'esprit : votre serviteur Gille,  
 Cousin et gendre de Bertrand  
 Singe du pape en son vivant,  
 Tout fraîchement en cette ville  
 Arrive en trois bateaux, exprès pour vous parler.  
 Car il parle, on l'entend ; il sait danser, baller,  
 Faire des tours de toute sorte,  
 Passer en des cerceaux ; et le tout pour six blancs ;  
 Non, messieurs, pour un sou : si vous n'êtes contents,  
 Nous rendrons à chacun son argent à la porte.  
 Le singe avait raison : ce n'est pas sur l'habit  
 Que la diversité me plaît, c'est dans l'esprit :  
 L'une fournit toujours des choses agréables ;  
 L'autre, en moins d'un moment, lasse les regardants.  
 O que de grands seigneurs, au léopard semblables,  
 N'ont que l'habit pour tous talents !”

<sup>1</sup> 1610-1660.<sup>2</sup> 1605-1654.

Scarron was the first Frenchman who expanded the *esprit narquois* from an interjection or a phrase into the dimensions of a narrative or a chapter of gossip. The satire of the age was not good-natured: witness above all the pages of Talle-mant des Réaux, the prying and quizzing biographer of his contemporaries. Good-humour did not thrive in the days of the Fronde; and Scarron writes the language of disgust and discontent, revolting against sorrow and disgrace with the fixed determination to force himself and all his hearers into a loud and long guffaw. Well-born, with money at command, taking holy orders rather out of caprice than with any manifest desire to devote himself to piety, he began life with every prospect of a happy and bright career. He travelled to Rome, and does not seem to have displayed much of the twist of genius which was afterwards conspicuous in him. When still young he became a helpless cripple; and this under such lamentable circumstances that his health quitted his mind at the same time with his body. A story was invented to account for his misfortune, which is not in itself very creditable. It was said that, at the carnival, he and some of his friends made themselves up as savages, in savages' costume; and that their presence in the crowd being somewhat roughly resented, they took to flight and swam across the river, which in Scarron's case brought on an attack of paralysis. Another story is that which makes Scarron a notable example of the mischief wrought by quack-doctors in their treatment of specific cases, the consequence of which was that he kept his room for five-and-twenty years, scarcely ever able to leave his chair. He thus describes himself in one of his letters:—

“I have lived to thirty; if I live to forty I shall only add many miseries to those which I have endured these last eight or nine years. My person was well made, though short; my disorder has shortened it still more by a foot. My head is a little broad for my shape; my face is full enough for my



body to appear very meagre ; I have hair enough to render a wig unnecessary ; I have got many white hairs. . . . My teeth, formerly square pearls, are now of the colour of wood, and will soon be of slate. My legs and thighs first formed an obtuse angle, afterwards a right angle, and at length an acute one. My thighs and body form another ; and my head, always dropping on my breast, makes me not ill represent a Z. I have my arms shortened as well as my legs, and my fingers as well as my arms. In a word, I am an abridgment of human miseries." Writing to Sarasin he describes himself as

" A poor fellow,  
Very thin,  
With a wry neck,  
Whose body  
Quite twisted,  
Quite humpbacked,  
Aged,  
Fleshless,  
Is reduced  
Day and night  
To suffer,  
Without being cured,  
Some vehement  
Torments." <sup>1</sup>

That was what he made a joke of ; that, and the loss of his pension, and his being brought to death's door by a cough, and his poverty, and the world's treatment of himself, and the world's treatment of the world, and Mazarin, and what not.

<sup>1</sup> " Un pauvre  
Très-maigre,  
Au col tors  
Dont le corps  
Tout tortu,  
Tout bossu,  
Suranné

Décharné  
Est réduit,  
Jour et nuit,  
À souffrir  
Sans guérir  
Des tourments  
Véhéments."

When without any means, he petitioned the queen for the honour of being called her "sick-man by right of office." The following verses form part of the address :—

"Scarron, by the grace of God,  
Unworthy sick-man of the queen,  
A man without a house or home,  
But with plenty of evils and troubles ;  
A hospital moving up and down,  
Walking with other people's legs,  
Having no more any use for his own,  
Suffering much, and sleeping very little,  
And, however, very courageously  
Showing a good countenance, though playing a losing  
game.<sup>1</sup>

He got his title and a small pension, which he lost by attacking Mazarin. Poor and crippled as he was, his wit made way with the world. His small rooms attracted many of the best men in Paris. Georges de Scudéry, Sarasin, Boisrobert, Marigny, Chapelain, Voiture ; and amongst the ladies, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de la Sablière, Marion de Lorme, Ninon de l'Enclos, and, last not least, Françoise d'Aubigné, a grand-daughter of the friend of Henry IV., a ward of Scarron's neighbour the Baroness de Neuillant, who, afraid of being sent to a convent, and taking pity on the great soul cribbed in the wreck of a body, married him. When the notary asked him what dowery she brought, Scarron replied :  
"Two great mutinous eyes, a handsome bust, a pair of lovely

<sup>1</sup> "Scarron, par la grace de Dieu,  
Malade indigne de la reine,  
Homme n'ayant ni feu ni lieu,  
Mais bien du mal et de la peine ;  
Hôpital allant et venant,  
Des jambes d'autrui cheminant,  
Des siennes n'ayant plus l'usage,  
Souffrant beaucoup, dormant bien peu,  
Et pourtant faisant par courage  
Bonne mine et fort mauvais jeu."

hands, and plenty of wit;" asked as to his own settlement, he answered laconically, "Immortality." He was right; but another vied with Scarron in giving immortality to Françoise d'Aubigné, who is better known to fame as Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV.

Scarron wrote several comedies in verse; one, *l'Héritier ridicule* (1649), which it is said Louis XIV. desired to see acted twice in one day; and several about *Jodelet* and his adventures. *Don Japhet d'Arménie* is considered his best play, but it is very coarse and licentious. In his *Écolier de Salamague*, Crispin appears for the first time on the stage. His epitaph, which is written by himself, is as follows:—

" He who sleeps here now,  
Caused more pity than envy,  
And suffered a thousand deaths  
Before losing his life.  
Passer-by, do not make any noise here,  
And take care not to awake him,  
For this is the first night  
That poor Scarron slumbers." <sup>1</sup>

Georges de Scudéry,<sup>2</sup> the brother of Mademoiselle de Scudéry of whom we have already spoken, determined, after an excellent education, and after having followed the profession of arms, to devote himself to poetry and the drama. He edited the poems of Théophile de Viau (1632), wrote *The Tomb of Théophile*, and showed already in the preface his vanity and self-conceit. "If there exists some hare-brained fellow," so he says, "who thinks that I have offended his imaginary glory, in order to show him that I fear him as much as I esteem him, I wish him to know that I am called

<p>- "Celuy qui cy mainte ant dort Fit plus de pitié que d'envie, Et souffrit mille fois la mort Avant que de perdre la vie.</p>	<p>Passant, ne fais icy de bruit, Et garde bien qu'il ne s'éveille, Car voicy la première nuit Que le pauvre Scarron sommeille."</p>
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<sup>2</sup> 1601-1667.

de Scudéry." This tone never left him. His first play, *Lygdamon and Lydias*, represented in 1629, was printed in 1631, and dedicated to the young Duke de Montmorency, with a preface, in which he states: "These verses which I offer you are, if not well made, at least composed with little trouble. . . . I have passed more years in arms than in my study, and have used more matches for my gun than candles, so that I know better to arrange soldiers than words, and better to form battalions than phrases." This play received, however, the warm praises of friends like Corneille, Hardy, Scarron, and Rotrou. In the last-named year he put upon the stage *The Deceiver Punished*, a tragedy in verse, which was followed in succession by fourteen others. But perhaps the best of all his plays is his *Comedy of the Comedians*, first performed in 1634. In the prologue to this piece, which, as well as the first two acts, is written in prose, we are given to understand that the scene is laid in Lyons, and that the harlequin of the company has been round the town, accompanied by a drummer, to announce the *Comédiens du Roy*, whereof the very middling members have given themselves each brave names, such as Belle-Ombre, Belle-Fleur, Belle-Épine, and Bear-Séjour. No one, however, will believe in the ability of the troupe to entertain their audience. The harlequin returns, and is obliged to confess to the company that he has had no success; and in fact the room is supposed to be absolutely empty. At length a spectator arrives, in the person of M. de Blandimare, who, it turns out, is industriously looking for a runaway nephew. The said nephew is no other than Belle-Ombre, the doorkeeper of the establishment. He does not recognise his uncle, but directs his attention to a bill of the play. We may quote a few passages from this comedy, which will fairly illustrate the style of the author:—

*M. de Blandimare (reading the bill).* The Comedians of the King. . . . Oh! we know that without being told. This posi-



tion, and that of gentleman of the bedchamber in ordinary, are cheap just now. True, the wages are not high. What is the fee for entering?

*Belle-Ombre.* Eight sous.

M. de Blandimare takes pity on the company, and invites them to supper. The second act of the piece discovers them at table.

*M. de Blandimare.* Let us have some finger-glasses; we have done eating. There, give me your hand, Mademoiselle de Beau. . . .

*Mad. de Beau-Soleil.* De Beau-Soleil, at your service, sir.

*M. de Blandimare.* The fault of my memory is much to be excused, for all the tribes of comedians have so much resemblance in names that it is very difficult to avoid confounding them. M. de Bellerose, de Belleville, Beller Roche, Beauchâteau, Beaulieu, Beaupré, Bellefleur, Belle-Epine, Beau-Soleil, Belle-Ombre; in fact they comprise in themselves all the beauties of nature.

The host presently entreats his guests to give him some specimens of their repertory:—

*M. de Blandimare.* What pieces have you?

*M. de Beau-Soleil.* All those of the late Hardy. . . . Théophile's *Pyrame*, the *Sylvie*, *Chryséide*, *Sylvanire*, the *Folies de Cardenio*, the *Infidèle Confidente*, *Phitis de Scyre*, the *Bergeries* of M. de Racan, *Lygdamon*, the *Trompeur Puni*, *Mélite*, *Clitandre*, *la Veuve*, *la Bague de l'Oubly*, and all that the best wits of the age have produced. But for the present it will be enough if we let you hear a pastoral eclogue by the author of the *Trompeur Puni*.

*M. de Blandimare.* You have made no bad selection by way of pleasing me, for the gentleman of whom you speak is, in my mind, one of those who carry a sword which is of great assistance to the pen.

The eclogue is duly given and admired; so much so that M. de Blandimare declares that he will never leave the com-

pany, and demands to see a whole play ; whereupon follows a tragi-comedy in three acts, and in verse.

Scudéry was never averse to self-praise ; he liked to think of himself as the fashionable dramatist of the period ; and he was always on the best terms with Richelieu and the representatives of authority in general ; we may add, with the Academy in particular. It was Scudéry, be it remembered, who was most active in securing the decision of the new court of literature against the *Cid*, and he was on constant terms of rivalry with Corneille. We do not find that the latter troubled himself greatly to prove or assert his superiority ; whilst of Scudéry the best thing that we can say of him in this connection is that his ambition to excel the author of the *Cid* led to the production of his two most respectable tragedies, *Ibrahim or the illustrious Bashaw*, and *Arminius*. Let it however be stated to his honour that after he had dedicated his epic poem *Alaric* to Christina of Sweden, and when that Queen had offered him a heavy chain of gold if he would expunge some lines written in honour of one of her former favourites, the Count de la Gardie, he magnanimously replied : " If that golden chain were as weighty as the one mentioned in the history of the Incas, I will never destroy an altar on which I have sacrificed."

Amongst the minor dramatists of the age of Louis XIV. Edme Boursault<sup>1</sup> deserves a prominent place. He was, as we have already mentioned, but a young man when he undertook to ridicule Molière for the company of the hôtel de Bourgogne, and he lived to do better things. At all events he offered Boileau voluntarily a considerable sum of money when the latter was in distress, and thus gained the affection of a man who had begun by avenging Molière upon his over-ambitious rival. His comedy *le Mercure galant* contains more than one genuinely ludicrous situation ; whilst his two

<sup>1</sup> 1628-1701.

comedies *Esope à la Cour* and *Esope à la Ville* met with great success. Of the first, which was played after his death, Montesquieu bears a very flattering testimony. "I remember," he says, "after seeing a piece called *Esop at Court*, I was so penetrated by the desire of being a better man, that I do not know if I ever made a stronger resolution."

Regnard,<sup>1</sup> author of the *Joueur*, the *Légataire*, and the *Ménechmes*, has earned a higher reputation than Boursault. Boileau says of him little more than that he is in no small degree funny ; and perhaps no one would be likely to derive from his comedies any greater benefit than arises from a hearty, self-forgetting laugh. He occupies, after Molière's death, much the same position which Scarron occupied before Molière had risen to fame ; excelling the pungent cripple in farcical humour, whilst he falls short of him in wit. But with the death of Molière high comedy in France was destined to slumber for many years before any new creator should arise to give us so much as the basis of comparison with the master-hand.

<sup>1</sup> 1665-1709.

## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. THE MORALISTS.

THE written eloquence of the seventeenth century, and of the age of Louis XIV. in particular, is hardly less brilliant than the beauty of its poetical productions. The influence of the style of Calvin and his school had gradually and surely made itself felt, even upon those who were far from sympathising in the opinions of the lawgiver of the Reformation, and in spite of the careful seclusion of the works of Protestant writers from all the public libraries. The prose of the Augustan age of French literature, setting aside mere translations from the ancients, which indeed were not many, inasmuch as the classical Renaissance had cleared off most of what there was to be done in this respect, was employed in four principal literary *genres*: philosophy, as exemplified by Descartes, morality, as diversely exemplified by Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, memoirs, and correspondence. In the last of these *genres* the talent of Guez de Balzac<sup>1</sup> is supreme; although we have already seen that more than one woman excelled in this peculiar literary style, and deserved that their familiar and every-day letters to their friends should be handed down as models for posterity.<sup>2</sup>

Jean-Louis Guez, Seigneur de Balzac, was born at Angoulême, and was a central figure of society in the first half of the seventeenth century. He was one of the

<sup>1</sup> 1597-1655.<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, Madame de Sevigné.



original members of the Academy, though he does not seem to have been sedulous in attending its sittings, and he certainly maintained throughout his life an independence of thought and expression by no means characteristic of the majority of his colleagues. Chapelain was amongst the most frequent of his correspondents, and through him Balzac always communicated with the society of the hôtel de Rambouillet, which however he did not attend in person. He expresses a warm admiration for the hostess of that celebrated *coterie*; but the retirement in which he preferred to live was so greatly cherished by him, that he seldom interrupted it even by a visit to the capital. Years before he had seen Madame de Rambouillet<sup>1</sup> he dedicated to her more than one of his books, such as *Le Romain* and *La Vertu Romaine*, in which he pays many delicate compliments to the object of his gallant admiration. Balzac's was already an influential name amongst his fellow-countrymen, and the relations subsisting between him and Madame de Rambouillet remind us of the diplomatic courtesies of a couple of powerful monarchs. In 1640 he sent to her—always through his correspondent Chapelain—an early copy of his *Discours de l'Eloquence*; and the admiration excited by it was no greater than it deserves.

The style of Guez de Balzac, which may be favourably studied in many of his *Letters*, as well as in the best of his essays, such as those on *The Prince*, *Aristippus*, or *the Court*, and the *Christian Socrates*, is perhaps the finest example of French prose to be met with in the first half of the seventeenth century: better than that of Descartes, better even than that of La Rochefoucauld. It is the prose of a scholar, of a grammarian by instinct, of a rhetorician by talent and culture. Well balanced, well moulded and polished, it shines and attracts in comparison with the writings of the most

<sup>1</sup> M. C. Livet, *Précieux et Précieuses*, p. 12, shows that Balzac had certainly not seen Madame de Rambouillet in 1638.

elegant literary men in an age of literary elegance. True, Balzac is occasionally strained in thought, and extravagant in the use of figures ; but he is always fresh and vigorous. We will quote as a sample a letter which he wrote to Corneille in acknowledgment of the latter's *Cinna*—a letter of which Voltaire said that foreigners might see from it what eloquence was in the age which produced it.

“ I have felt a wonderful relief since the arrival of your parcel, and I proclaim a miracle from the commencement of my letter. Your *Cinna* cures the sick ; it makes the paralytic clap their hands ; it restores speech to the dumb ; it were too little to say to those who have a cold. As a matter of fact, I had lost my speech and my voice, and since I have recovered both by your aid, it is very right that I should employ them both to your glory, and say, without ceasing : ‘ What a beautiful thing ! ’ Nevertheless, you are afraid of being one of those who are oppressed by the majesty of the subjects which they treat, and you do not conceive that you have brought sufficient force to bear to sustain the Roman grandeur. Though this modesty charms me it does not persuade me, and I object to it in the interest of truth. . . . You make me see Rome, as much as it is possible in Paris, and you have not broken it in removing it. It is not a Rome of Cassiodorus, nor as distracted as it was in the ages of the Theodorics ; it is a Rome of Livy, and as pompous as it was in the time of the first Cæsars. . . . The wife of Horatius and the mistress of *Cinna*, which are your two genuine productions, and the two pure creations of your mind, are they not also the chief ornaments of your two poems ? And what has sacred antiquity produced of vigorous and firm in the weaker sex which can compare with these new heroines which you have introduced to the world, these Roman women of your creation ? I have not wearied of considering, during a fortnight, the one which I received last. I have elicited admiration for it from all the most accomplished men of our province : our authors and poets say wonders of it, but a doctor, who is a neighbour of mine, who generally uses a lofty style, certainly speaks of it in a strange way ; and there can be no harm in your knowing how far you have affected

his mind. On the first day he contented himself with saying that your Emilia was the rival of Cato and Brutus in the passion for liberty. Now he goes much farther: at one time he declared her possessed with the demon of the Republic, and at another he calls her the lovely, the rational, the holy, the adorable fury. These are strange words on the subject of your Roman lady; but they are not without foundation. She does in fact inspire the whole conspiracy, and gives ardour to the party by the fire which she breathes into the breast of the leader; she undertakes, in her vengeance, to avenge the whole earth; she would sacrifice to her father a victim too great for Jove himself. She is, in my opinion, so excellent a character, that I think it is saying little to her credit to say that you are far happier in your race than Pompey was in his, and that your child Emilia is worth beyond comparison more than her grandson Cinna. If the latter has even greater worth than Seneca supposed, it is inasmuch as he has fallen into your hands, and because you have taken charge of him. He is indebted to you for his merit, as to Augustus for his dignity; the Emperor made him a consul, and you have made him a gentleman.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “J’ai senti un notable soulagement depuis l’arrivée de votre paquet, et je crie miracle dès le commencement de ma lettre. Votre *Cinna* guérit les malades; il fait que les paralytiques battent les mains, il rend la parole à un muet, ce seroit trop peu de dire à un enrhumé. En effet, j’avois perdu la parole avec la voix; et, puisque je les recouvre l’une et l’autre par votre moyen, il est bien juste que je les emploie toutes deux à votre gloire, et à dire sans cesse: ‘La belle chose.’ Vous avez peur néanmoins d’être de ceux qui sont accablés par la majesté des sujets qu’ils traitent, et ne pensez pas avoir apporté assez de force pour soutenir la grandeur romaine. Quoique cette modestie me plaise, elle ne me persuade pas, et je m’y oppose pour l’intérêt de la vérité. . . . Vous nous faites voir Rome tout ce qu’elle peut être à Paris, et ne l’avez point brisée en la remuant. Ce n’est point une Rome de Cassiodore, et aussi déchirée qu’elle l’étoit au siècle des Théodoric; c’est une Rome de Tite-Live, et aussi pompeuse qu’elle étoit au temps de premiers Césars. . . La femme d’Horace et la maîtresse de Cinna, qui sont vos deux véritables enfantements et les deux pures créatures de votre esprit, ne sont-elles pas aussi les principaux ornements de vos deux poèmes? Et qu’est-ce que la sainte antiquité a produit de vigoureux et de ferme dans le sexe foible, qui soit comparable à ces nouvelles héroïnes que vous avez mises au monde, à ces Romaines de votre façon? Je ne m’ennuie point, depuis quinze jours, de considérer celle que j’ai reçue la dernière. Je l’ai fait admirer à tous les habiles de notre province: nos orateurs et nos poètes en disent merveilles, mais un docteur de mes voisins qui se met

As we pass from the critics and literary men, who are known to us chiefly by their studied correspondence, to the writers of historical memoirs, and from those who were active in the literary world to those who played their part both in the service of their country and at the desk, we are naturally induced to dwell first upon the name of François, Duke de la Rochefoucauld,<sup>1</sup> Prince of Marsillac, a soldier, a historian, and yet better known to posterity as a moral philosopher, whose maxims have produced so vast a practical influence upon his fellow-countrymen in succeeding ages. La Rochefoucauld was, in an emphatic sense, the creation of the times in which he lived ; not only the creation but the instrument, shaped by the circumstances which surrounded him, and used, like a worthy tool, for lofty purposes. The miseries of his fellow-countrymen made him a soldier of the Fronde : his fruitless patriotic labours, his unsated sympathy, and the triumph of might over right—crowned as that might became with all the glories of a “golden age”—made him a moralist, a philosopher, and a cynic. The strength of his personal philosophy, tried by the most severe test, a threefold domestic

d'ordinaire sur le haut style, en parle certes d'une étrange sorte ; et il n'y a point de mal que vous sachiez jusqu'où vous avez porté son esprit. Il se contentoit le premier jour de dire que votre Emilie étoit la rivale de Caton et de Brutus dans la passion de la liberté. A cette heure, il va bien plus loin ; tantôt il la nomme la possédée du démon de la république, et quelquefois la belle, la raisonnable, la sainte, et l'adorable furie. Voilà d'étranges paroles sur le sujet de votre Romaine ; mais elles ne sont pas sans fondement. Elle inspire, en effet, toute la conjuration, et donne chaleur au parti par le feu qu'elle jette dans l'âme du chef ; elle entreprend, en se vengeant, de venger toute la terre ; elle veut sacrifier à son père une victime qui seroit trop grand pour Jupiter même. C'est, à mon gré, une personne si excellente, que je pense dire peu à son avantage, de dire que vous êtes beaucoup plus heureux en votre race que Pompée n'a été en la sienne, et que votre fille Emilie vaut, sans comparaison, davantage que Cinna son petit-fils. Si celui-ci même a plus de vertu que n'a eue Sénèque, c'est pour être tombé entre vos mains, et à cause que vous avez pris soin de lui. Il vous est obligé de son mérite comme à Auguste de sa dignité : l'empereur le fit consul, et vous l'avez fait honnête homme.”

<sup>1</sup> 1613-1680.



tragedy, is illustrated by the testimony which Madame de Sévigné bears in one of her letters, dated June 1672. "I saw his heart laid bare," she says, "in this cruel occurrence; he is in the first rank of all that I ever saw of courage, worthiness, tenderness, and reason." When a man knows how to suffer, we conclude that there is something of value in his theory of human life, and that he does not give counsel without sufficient warrant.

No doubt La Rochefoucauld, as a young man, was an intriguer by instinct, and was drawn into the struggles of 1649 and the following years as much by his ambition as by his sympathy with the more serious motives of the Fronde. His passion for the Duchess de Longueville, sister to the Prince de Condé, sufficed to involve both himself and her, her husband and her brother, in rebellion. After the Fronde in its earlier phase had been overcome, the Duchess and her friends stirred up a new one, in which La Rochefoucauld engaged with much enthusiasm. He was declared guilty of high treason, but he continued for some time to continue a course of active hostility to Mazarin. Thanks to his great influence, he was included in the great amnesty of 1650; but he subsequently served under Condé, and was wounded in the struggle which took place in the streets of Paris in 1652, whilst once more fighting in the ranks of the rebels. A few months later, Mazarin having gained the upper hand, he was banished from the capital. It was a fatal moment for France; for the same triumph of the court which resulted in the disgrace of La Rochefoucauld and his friends crippled the whole kingdom, paralysed the power of the Parliament of Paris, and destroyed for a time the last vestige of constitutional government.

On the final re-establishment of peace between the court and the party of the Fronde, La Rochefoucauld shared in the general oblivion of the past, and, after the death of Mazarin

he took up his residence in Paris, and turned his thoughts almost wholly to literature. He was the friend and associate of Mesdames de la Fayette, de Sévigné, and de Sablé, and of the majority of those whose writings have shed lustre on the earlier years of Louis XIV.'s reign. In 1662 were published the *Memoirs of the Regency of Anne of Austria*, and three years later appeared his *Reflections and Opinions, or Moral Maxims*. It is upon the latter work that his fame will always chiefly rest. An acute observer rather than a dogmatist or theoriser, his reflections on the moral basis of human action strike the reader as the ingenious deductions of a shrewd man of the world from the events which have passed day by day before his eyes, and as the essence extracted from a close study of and insight into human character. Clearly and concisely expressed, in terse idiomatic French, which aims at none of the effects of rhetoric, each of his pithy sentences catches the understanding and arrests the attention of the reader. There was nothing previously published in France with which they might be compared; and if anything of more recent date, such as the numerous good things of Talleyrand, can be placed upon the same level with them, it is only in books of table-talk, of biography, of compiled anecdotes and *bons mots* that we shall encounter them. The *Thoughts* of Pascal are more elaborate, more discursive and disquisitional. They excel the maxims of La Rochefoucauld in literary style, in brilliancy and moral force; but, published five years later, they do not obscure the originality, or decrease the literary significance of La Rochefoucauld's work.

It is not the object of our author to hold up a moral standard, or to enlarge upon a moral text. His process is simply that of an observer: he exposes, he discriminates, he bares the truth which lies at the bottom of a polished and a selfish condition of society; but he nowhere expounds or holds up an ideal, or chides the vice which he discovers. He

is, as we have said, a cynic ; drily and indifferently pointing out the weaknesses of his fellow-men, but not caring to show them how these weaknesses may be converted into strength—though he himself knows well how it might be done, at least in his own case. He is a philosopher, but not a teacher ; he can read others, but can direct himself only. “Self-love is one of the two aspects of life ; La Rochefoucauld has never detected the other—the attraction which draws us to each other, and which becomes a virtue when we govern ourselves according to a moral order. La Rochefoucauld knows men ; he does not know man.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus the impression which La Rochefoucauld leaves upon us is an uncomfortable and disturbing sense of the pettiness of humanity. His revelations are incalculably serviceable to us ; but their use is only realised when we ourselves pass beyond the point where our cynic chooses to stop, and argue from the basis which he selected as his limit. Many of his reflections are by this time the proverbs of civilised nations ; every one of them is the text of a sermon which has been preached over and over again. Let us glance at a few examples :—

“Greater virtues are needed to support good than bad fortune.  
We are never so happy or so miserable as we think.

Treason is committed more frequently through weakness than through a deliberate design to betray.

Hypocrisy is a homage which vice pays to virtue.

We do not long give pleasure when we have only one kind of wit.

Reconciliation with our enemies is but the desire to improve our condition, a weariness of war, and a fear of some evil occurrence.

It is more disgraceful to mistrust our friends than to be deceived by them.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> There is at all events no cynicism here ; and it is to be observed that a few

Mistrust justifies the deceit of others.

Men would not live long in society if they were not the dupes of one another.

We give pleasure in the intercourse of life more frequently by our faults than by our good qualities.

The resolution never to deceive exposes us to frequent deceit."<sup>1</sup>

An acute discriminator of character, a contemporary of La Rochefoucauld, says of him : " He had always an habitual irresolution, but I know not to what to attribute it. . . . We see its effects although we do not know its cause. He was never a warrior, though he was very much a soldier. He was never actually a good courtier, although he had always the genuine intention to be one. He was never a good partisan, although he has been all his life allied to some party or other. That appearance of shamefacedness and timidity, which you see in him in the civil war, was in business matters turned into an air of apology. He always thought he stood in need of apology, which, coupled with his maxims, which do not display much faith in virtue, and with his practice, which of La Rochefoucauld's maxims are entirely in harmony with the loftiest kind of morality.

<sup>1</sup> " Il faut de plus grandes vertus pour soutenir la bonne fortune que la mauvaise.

On n'est jamais si heureux ni si malheureux qu'on s'imagine.

L'on fait plus souvent des trahisons par faiblesse que par un dessein formé de trahir.

L'hypocrisie est un hommage que le vice rend à la vertu.

On ne plaît pas longtemps quand on n'a qu'une sorte d'esprit.

La réconciliation avec nos ennemis n'est qu'un désir de rendre notre condition meilleure, une lassitude de la guerre, et une crainte de quelque mauvais événement.

Il est plus honteux de se défier de ses amis, que d'en être trompé.

Notre défiance justifie la tromperie d'autrui.

Les hommes ne vivraient pas longtemps en société, s'ils n'étaient les dupes les uns des autres.

Nous plaisons plus souvent dans le commerce de la vie par nos défauts que par nos bonnes qualités.

L'intention de ne jamais tromper nous expose à être souvent trompés."



has always been to extricate himself with as much impatience as he became involved, makes me conclude that he would have done much better to grow acquainted with himself, and to confine himself to passing, as he might have done, for the most polished courtier, and the most honourable man, in regard to every-day life, who has been known in his generation."

The estimate is evidently shrewd, even to us who know La Rochefoucauld only through his works, and by the more prominent circumstances of his life. It is in fact the estimate of a close student of human nature, the Cardinal de Retz,<sup>1</sup> whose *Memoirs* give us many faithful pictures of the age of Louis XIV., and throw light on many a chapter of literary history which would otherwise be obscure.

## § 2. HISTORIANS.

Jean Francois Paul de Gondi, afterwards Cardinal de Retz, born at Montmirail, destined at an early age for the Church, although by talent and disposition he was fit for anything rather than the life of an ecclesiastic, was one of the arch-plotters of that seditious and ambitious party who made the miseries of the lower orders, and the more or less justifiable struggles of the genuine patriots of the Fronde, a pretext for the advancement of their own schemes. Bold and unscrupulous from the beginning to the end of his career, Gondi made his *début* in the conspiracy fomented by Bouillon and others at Sedan, in 1641. On this occasion, for some reason of his own, "the young abbé, gallant, and duellist," as a competent historian describes him, recommended his associates to refrain from civil war, and, when he could not

<sup>1</sup> 1614-1679.

persuade them, betook himself to Paris, volunteered his services to the queen, and was sent to Brussels to negotiate for the assistance of a Spanish army. A little later, considering that his exertions had been ill repaid, he threw himself into the party of the Fronde, stirred up the Prince de Condé against Mazarin, instigated the clergy of Paris to oppose the loan which the cardinal was endeavouring to raise, and once more intrigued with Spain, secretly introducing a Spanish agent into the Parliament of Paris. After passing over anew to the court party, he was made coadjutor to his uncle, the Archbishop of Paris, and made his first bid for a cardinal's hat, "of which the brilliant red colour drives crazy the generality of those who are honoured by it,"<sup>1</sup> and which was refused him. Upon this he identified himself with the party of the princes, sowed enmity between the Duke d'Orléans and Mazarin, and even went so far as to foment a rising of the Paris *bourgeoisie* against the queen. The Fronde suppressed, he placed his services for the third time at the command of the queen, at the same time vainly endeavouring to organise a Third-Estate in the State. He was consoled, or rather bought off, by the Court, who obtained for him his coveted cardinalate from Innocent X., the latter being perhaps more ready to grant the young king's request because he knew that it would annoy and disconcert Mazarin. But de Retz's triumph was hardly worth the reaping. Towards the close of the same year he headed a large deputation of the clergy to the king at Compiègne, in order to entreat the latter's return to Paris. Louis did in fact return shortly afterwards; but Mazarin's jealousy of the younger and too ambitious cardinal was not satisfied until de Retz had been thrown into prison at Vincennes. The Parisian clergy did all they could to secure his release, but in vain. The king took the same view of the matter as his minister, and all

<sup>1</sup> De Retz's own words.

that de Retz could obtain was his removal to Nantes, from whence he presently escaped, and took refuge in Rome. His political career was at an end; and in the obscurity of a forced exile he devoted himself to the composition of his *Memoirs*. These latter, not published until after his death, have given him a posthumous fame greater than any which he could earn, when living, by his unstable, insincere, and often unpatriotic efforts.

Of the *Memoirs* of Cardinal de Retz Voltaire has remarked that they were written with an air of grandeur, an impetuosity of genius, and an inequality, which are the characteristics of his conduct. Another of his countrymen<sup>1</sup> speaks more warmly still. He says: "The style of de Retz is of the finest order of speech; it is full of fire . . . and unites to grandeur a supreme air of negligence, which constitutes its charm. Its expression is often lively, picturesque in its flow, always suited to the genius of the French language, yet full of imagination, and, at times, of magnificence." This praise can, above all, be applied to de Retz's sketches of character, and to some of his descriptions of scenes of which he was an eye-witness. One of his happiest efforts, and one which shows him at his best, is his character of Richelieu. It is shrewd, candid, and, considering how easily the writer might have been drawn into painting a more illustrious cardinal and a more successful politician in sombre hues, if anything too appreciative.

"Cardinal Richelieu was well born. His youth emitted scintillations of his worth: he distinguished himself in the Sorbonne; it was early perceived that he had force and vivacity of wit. As a rule he took a decision very well. He kept his word in cases where a high interest did not oblige him to the contrary; and if need were, he forgot nothing to maintain the appearance of good faith. He was not liberal, but he gave more

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve.

than he promised, and he gave a savour to his kindnesses in an admirable manner. He loved glory far more than morality sanctions, but it must be confessed that he abused no more than his merit entitled him the dispensation which he had taken with regard to his excessive ambition. He had neither a mind nor a heart superior to dangers; but he had neither inferior to them; and it may be said that he rather forestalled them by his sagacity than surmounted them by his firmness. He was a good friend; he would even have wished to be beloved by the public; but though he had the politeness, the outward appearance, and many other parts calculated to produce this result, he never had that indescribable something, which is yet, in this matter more of an acquisition than in any other. By his power and regal pomp he annihilated the personal majesty of the king; but he discharged the functions of royalty with so much dignity that he must have been no ordinary man not to confound right and wrong in so doing. He distinguished more judiciously than any other man in the world between the bad and the worse, between the good and the better, which is a great quality in a minister. . . . You will readily conclude that a man who has so many great qualities, and so many appearances even of those which he has not, maintains with tolerable ease in the world that kind of respect which eliminates scorn from hatred, and which, in a state wherein there are no longer any laws, supplies, at least for a time, their want.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Le cardinal de Richelieu avait de la naissance. Sa jeunesse jeta des étincelles de son mérite : il se distingua en Sorbonne ; on remarqua de fort bonne heure qu’il avait de la force et de la vivacité dans l’esprit. Il prenait d’ordinaire très-bien son parti. Il était homme de parole, où un grand intérêt ne l’obligeait pas au contraire ; et en cas, il n’oubliait rien pour sauver les apparences de la bonne foi. Il n’était pas libéral ; mais il donnait plus qu’il ne promettait. Il aimait la gloire beaucoup plus que la morale ne le permet, mais il faut avouer qu’il n’abusait qu’à proportion de son mérite de la dispense qu’il avait prise sur le point de l’excès de son ambition. Il n’avait ni l’un ni l’autre au-dessus des périls ; il n’avait ni l’un ni l’autre au-dessous ; et l’on peut dire qu’il en prévit davantage par sa sagacité qu’il n’en surmonta par sa fermeté. Il était bon ami ; il eût même souhaité d’être aimé du public ; mais quoi qu’il eût la civilité, l’extérieur et beaucoup d’autres parties propres à cet effet, il n’en eût jamais le je ne sais quoi, qui est encore en cette matière, plus acquis qu’en toute autre. Il anéantissait par son pouvoir et par son faste royal la majesté personnelle du roi ; mais il remplissait avec tant de dignité les fonctions de la



Amongst the other historians of the earlier part of the *Grand Monarque's* reign was François Endes de Mézeray,<sup>1</sup> one of the many literary men who had reason to be grateful for the munificent patronage of Richelieu. He was appointed historiographer to the king, and in 1649 he was selected to occupy the place in the Academy rendered vacant by Voiture's death. The honour was not undeserved, for six years before he had issued the first volume of his *History of France*. In 1667 he published a *Chronological Abstract of the History of France*, which, if neither very eloquent nor very philosophic, yet bears evidence of his industry and straightforwardness.<sup>2</sup> A contemporary lady-author of *Memoirs*, chiefly biographical, was Madame de Motteville,<sup>3</sup> daughter of a Norman father and a Spanish mother, and attached to the person of Anne of Austria. Left a widow whilst still young, she became the personal friend and companion of the Queen-regent after the death of Louis XIII., being at that time no more than twenty-two years of age; and in this capacity she was able to follow the politics of the court during the existence of the Fronde. Her *Memoirs* extend over the period between the marriage and death of Anne of Austria; and besides being valuable as a contribution to the history of the age, they are written with no small amount of elegance and spirit.

royauté, qu'il fallait n'être pas du vulgaire pour ne pas confondre le bien et le mal en ce fait. Il distinguait plus judicieusement qu'un homme du monde entre le mal et le pis, entre le bien et le mieux, ce qui est une grande qualité pour un ministre. . . . Vous jugez facilement qu'un homme qui a autant de grandes qualités et autant d'apparences de celles même qu'il n'avait pas, se conserve assez aisément dans le monde cette sorte de respect qui démêle le mépris d'avec la haine, et qui dans un Etat où il n'y a plus de lois, supplée au moins pour quelque temps à leur défaut."

<sup>1</sup> 1610-1683.

<sup>2</sup> Boileau pays Mézeray a compliment in his *Art poétique*, bk. ii.

"Loin de moi ces rimeurs craintifs . . .

Ils n'osent un moment perdre un sujet de vue ;

Pour prendre Dôle il faut que Lille soit rendue

Et que leur vers exact, ainsi que Mézeray,

Ait fait déjà tomber les remparts de Courtrai."

<sup>3</sup> 1621-1689.

Another minor historian of the age of Louis XIV., Bussy-Rabutin,<sup>1</sup> was one of those men who have had no further tendency of literary fame than a lease terminating with their lifetime, and who have "shone in the world to be eclipsed by posterity."<sup>2</sup> Like La Rochefoucauld, St. Evremond, Saint Simon, and two or three more of his special literary denomination, he was a man born in the highest grade of society, who, not satisfied with social distinction, coveted literary fame in addition ; and it is probable that, before he had tasted many of the pleasures of a satisfied ambition, he was inclined to wish that he had coveted it less eagerly. Bussy-Rabutin was a dull man by nature, and a wit by assiduous cultivation. He had apparently more knack of expression than ideas ; and though, from one point of view and in respect of one of his works, his *Histoire Amoureuse*, he must be considered eminently readable, his literary repute has always been more or less at a discount. A libertine, with all the appetite and little of the relieving archness of La Fontaine, he unfortunately for himself carried his lack of circumspection into his writings, and that in so outrageous a form that his most ambitious work ruined him beyond redemption. His *Memoirs* and *Correspondence* reveal the poverty of his mind and judgment ; and if these were all he had written he might have remained in the list of those nonentities whose books are never republished, or never even printed, and of whom a literary chronicler takes no account. But in 1665, the very year in which he was elected a member of the Academy in the place previously occupied by Chastelet and d'Ablancourt, he issued a *Histoire Amoureuse des Gaules*. In this loose chronicle he had the heartlessness to include his own cousin, Madame de Sévigné ; and others who, with far greater claim to distinction, had probably even still more powerful avengers. However this may be, he paid in his own person for all concoctors of scandalous records, and for all the

<sup>1</sup> 1618-1693.<sup>2</sup> Gêrusez *Histoire de la littérature française*, vol. ii. p. 344.

shameless libertines of his time. An example was necessary : Paris became violently virtuous ; Bussy-Rabutin was cast into the Bastille, and was made the subject of a score of pamphlets and epigrams. He lived in disgrace for nearly thirty years, and the most abject flatteries and entreaties could not induce the king to forgive him. As for his literary style, no one has written better of him than his friend Saint Evremond, according to whom "his elocution is pure, and his expressions are natural, noble, and concise. His portraits especially have a negligent, frank, and original grace." We may add a grain of salt when this over-friendly critic proceeds to say that the wit of Bussy-Rabutin was marvellous.

## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. BOILEAU.

WE come now to a great critic, the direct successor of Malherbe, who, perhaps more than any other Frenchman, may be considered as the central literary figure of the seventeenth century—or, at all events, of the long period comprised in the reign of Louis XIV. We have several times referred to Boileau,<sup>1</sup> to his personal influence or his critical judgment, and we shall have to refer to him frequently again. No man mixed himself more completely with the literary activity of his age: no man was more ubiquitous, more generally deferred to, more in relation with men of learning or imagination, better able, up to a certain point, to measure and to classify his contemporaries.

Nicolas Boileau Despréaux, a Parisian, son of a clerk to the Parliament of Paris, was born in the year that saw the first representation of Corneille's *Cid*, and died but a few months before the birth of Jean Jacques Rousseau. The eulogist and the disciple of Malherbe, he lived long enough to mark the budding genius of Voltaire, and to perceive the dawn of that new philosophy which was to dissolve, like an alembic, so much of what he held most sacred and valuable. Of all that he saw and all that he understood, Boileau was no mere critic from the outside; he was *pars magna* of the

<sup>1</sup> 1636-1711.



life and genius of his age. One of the special objects of the king's favour, commissioned by the *Grand Monarque*, in conjunction with Racine, to write a history of his so-called glorious reign,<sup>1</sup>—a work which, we need hardly say, was never carried out,—he enjoyed throughout his life the influence and consideration due to a man of pre-eminent talent and quickness of wit. His father had trained him in the study of the law, and subsequently of theology. He went, indeed, so far as to take holy orders, and held a small benefice worth some thirty pounds a year; but, smitten, like Racine, by the expanding spirit of magnificence in action and idea, which was the strongest manifestation of Louis' influence upon his time, he struck out a more congenial path for himself; and whilst his friend turned from the asceticism of Port-Royal to the splendours of the stage, Boileau forsook law and theology for satire. At the age of thirty he published his *Satires*, which instantly established his claim to be considered the most formidable literary critic of the day, and first attracted the notice of the king. If Boileau was an acute satirist, he was at the same time a not over-prudent courtier. He had a whip for the writers of bad books, and for the ridicules and anomalies of society; but he seldom lavished indiscriminate flattery and fulsome praise on the young monarch, who being about the same age as himself, had just escaped from the leading strings of the ambitious Mazarin, and was giving evidence of the personal authority and power of will which he afterwards so clearly manifested. Boileau meant to succeed from a worldly point of view, without breaking his spine by too much bowing and scraping; and having shown that he could write excellent satires, without giving too great offence to the general public, he certainly deserved success. There was plenty of work for Boileau to do; and he prosecuted his campaign against bad taste with infinite zest, although

<sup>1</sup> Louis made them his "historiographers" in 1677.

not with the vehement indignation of a Juvenal. If it was the age of Corneille, it was also the age in which Scarron pretended to rival Molière. It was an age of newfangled burlesque, in which everything gave place to broad and reckless humour; an age of abortive epics,<sup>1</sup> in which grand aims fell before impotence of thought and poverty of expression. Boileau came forward as the champion of good taste, as the legitimate successor of Malherbe; and he had no sooner spoken than all whose opinion was worth having admitted the sufficiency of his credentials.

From 1669 until the end of the century he employed himself, now and again, in the composition of elaborate and poetical *Epîtres* to his friends—letters embodying sound literary and social judgments, themselves to a certain extent satirical, and preferred by many subsequent critics to his earlier *Satires*. Greater still as a work of art, and ranked by Voltaire as even superior to Horace's famous Epistle *ad Pisones*, was the *Art Poétique*, published in 1673. His *Lutrin*, a heroi-comic poem, was the production of Boileau's full maturity, and in it his ease of versification and polish of expression are most distinctly illustrated. In addition to these poetical works, Boileau wrote, in excellent prose, a free translation of Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime*, as well as critical reflections on that author, several important dissertations, and other minor scattered pieces.

Boileau probably began to write verses in his boyhood. He was the eleventh child of his father; his eldest brother, Gilles Boileau, was an author before Nicolas was born, whilst another brother, Jacques, was a historian, who acquired at least notoriety. It was in fact a studious family, and the younger son acquired literary tastes as naturally as he learned how to speak. His first satire, written on the model of

<sup>1</sup> *Moïse*, by Saint-Amant; *Alaric*, by Scudéry; *Saint-Louis*, by Le Moyne, and many others.

Juvenal—though without the strength of the Latin poet—was composed before he was twenty-five. It was discovered by Furetière amongst the papers of Gilles Boileau ; and the finder, himself something of a satirist, admired the verses, and showed them to his acquaintance. In this manner Boileau's earliest work is said to have been published without his knowledge ; and he literally "woke to find himself famous." He forthwith made congenial friends ; was invited to the *réunions* of Madame de Sablé and Mademoiselle de Scudéry ; was sought out by Chapelain, Cotin, and others ; was able to cultivate the acquaintance of Madame de Sévigné, Madame de la Fayette, and such men as Molière, La Fontaine, Racine, and La Rochefoucauld. Thenceforth Boileau was in his element. He never married—hardly ever fell in love ; but his friendships for literary men were often warm and enduring. Between himself and Racine in particular a close tie was formed, which was broken only by the death of the dramatist, who, on his deathbed, declared that he deemed it a happiness to die before his friend. On the decease of Boileau's father the poet inherited a competence ; he instantly made himself the centre of a literary club, assembling in his own house a little circle of harmonious spirits, of whom the earliest and most constant were Molière (whom they called Gélaste), Racine (Acante), La Fontaine (Polyphile), Boileau (Ariste),<sup>1</sup> and Chapelain.

The fame of Boileau rapidly grew, especially after he had published his collected *Satires*. It was no doubt well for him that he began as a satirist, for we may question whether the *Lutrin*, for instance, would have made anything like the same impression upon the court and the town. Boileau was a writer of magnificent French, he was clear in his judgment of men, and he expressed himself tersely and to the point, whether he chose to praise or blame. But he has none, or

<sup>1</sup> La Fontaine makes mention of this circle in *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*. See *infra*, p. 279.

little, of the poetic gift which could write sweetly on a trifle. He was the poet of common sense and good taste ; but this by itself is not enough to charm a wide audience. The fact was that Boileau caught the fickle fancy of a somewhat trivial generation ; but, having caught it, he knew how to secure and keep it ; and that which he gave made men overlook that which he had not to give. No French critic's name stands as high as that of Boileau, and deservedly ; for it is impossible to read his works—or at all events his literary judgments—without admitting his power and refinement. A parallel might be drawn between Boileau and Dr. Johnson ; for in one respect at least the two were remarkable alike. Both were more or less sound appraisers of the brains of their fellow-men ; both were esteemed by their contemporaries with almost extravagant appreciation ; and both retained their authority by the very candour and evident honesty of their judgments. Many anecdotes of this latter peculiarity are recorded of Boileau. Louis XIV. once made a copy of verses, and submitted them to the critic, in whose opinion he had much confidence. “Sire,” said Boileau, after glancing at the lines, “nothing can hinder your Majesty from doing what you wish to do : you wished to write bad verses, and you have succeeded.” Once again, an idle duke, having obtained a sonnet, written by an obscure rhymester, showed it to Boileau, who shrugged his shoulders. The duke took the verses to the Dauphine, who praised them ; whereupon the busybody returned to the poet and said : “The king likes it, and the princess likes it !” “His Majesty,” rejoined Boileau, “is excellent in the taking of towns ; the princess is a lady of infinite grace ; but allow me to say that I know more about verses than either.” Of course the duke hurried to the king, but all that Louis said was, “I regret to say that I think Boileau is right.” And yet this honest critic was at times to say the least of it, courtly ; and for his reward he



retained the favour of the arbitrary monarch to the end of his life.

It is time to pass from the man to his works ; and the instant we do so, how many an oracular sentence, how many a rounded phrase or couplet, how many a strikingly just—with here and there a strikingly unjust—estimate, which has ticketed his contemporaries to the end of time, crowds in upon our memory. It was Boileau who praised a poetaster's play as being "in so much favour in the provinces," who declared that "nothing is fine but what is true." If some of his judgments appear exaggerated, certainly the majority of them have secured the sanction of posterity. Of Racan he said : "Racan could sing in the absence of a Homer."<sup>1</sup> Of three poets somewhat unequally yoked, he said : "In Gombaud, Maynard, and Malleville, you can scarcely admire two or three lines in a thousand."<sup>2</sup> He makes fun of Théophile de Viau ; he extols d'Urfé's *Astrée* to the skies ; he is enthusiastic (at least with his pen) in Corneille's favour, writing the spirited quatrain which we have already once quoted,<sup>3</sup> and speaks also of the "sweet terror" and "charming pity" excited by the great dramatist. Of Chapelain and his *Pucelle*, he writes : "Cursed be the author whose harsh and coarse vigour, torturing his brain, rhymed in spite of Minerva."<sup>4</sup> Of Georges de Scudéry he says : "Thrice happy Scudéry, whose fertile pen can without difficulty generate a volume in a month."<sup>5</sup> Of Molière he says that "Perchance he might have reaped the meed of his art if, less friendly to the people,

<sup>1</sup> *Satire* ix. 44.—See bk. iv., ch. 3, p. 65, note i.

<sup>2</sup> "A peine dans Gombaud, Maynard, et Malleville,  
En peut on admirer deux ou trois entre mille."—*Art Poétique*, ii. 97.

<sup>3</sup> See bk. iv., ch. 4, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> "Maudit soit l'auteur dur dont l'âpre et rude verve  
Son cerveau tenaillant rima malgré Minerve."

In the little coterie which met in Boileau's house the fines consisted in the enforced reading of a certain number of lines from the *Pucelle*.

<sup>5</sup> "Bienheureux Scudéry dont la fertile plume  
Peut tous les mois sans peine enfanter un volume."—*Satire* ii.

he had not often made his figures grimace in his learned pictures, neglected the pleasant and the refined for the burlesque, and shamelessly allied Terence with Tabarin."<sup>1</sup> Of d'Arnauld, the father of the Port-Royalists, brother of Mère Angelique, Boileau's judgment is at once lofty and marked by the same generous enthusiasm which he often breathes into his laudatory notices. It was written in the form of an epitaph, and is the more honourable to our author as he knew that the Jansenist had died in disgrace at Brussels, and was strongly disliked by the king.

"At the foot of this altar of rude construction  
Lies, without pomp, enclosed in a simple coffin,  
The most learned mortal who ever wrote ;  
Arnauld, who, informed in grace by Jesus Christ,  
Fighting for the Church, has, within the Church itself,  
Endured more than one outrage and more than one anathema.  
Full of the fire which the Holy Spirit breathed into his heart,  
He overthrew Pelagius, smote Calvin with his thunder,  
Confounded the morality of all false doctors.  
But as a reward for his zeal we have seen him repelled,  
Oppressed in a hundred places by their black conspiracy,  
A wanderer, poor, banished, prescribed, persecuted ;  
And even on his death their only half-extinguished fury  
Would never have left his ashes in repose,  
If God himself had not concealed here the bones  
Of his holy follower from these devouring wolves."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "C'est par là que Molière, illustrant ses écrits,  
Peut-être de son art eût emporté le prix,  
Si moins ami du peuple en ses doctes peintures  
Il n'eût point fait souvent grimacer ses figures,  
Quitté pour le bouffon l'agréable et le fin  
Et sans honte à Tércence allié Tabarin."

<sup>2</sup> "Au pied de cet autel de structure grossière,  
Git sans pompe, enfermé dans une vile bière,  
Le plus savant mortel qui jamais ait écrit ;  
Arnauld, qui sur la grâce instruit par Jésus Christ,  
Combattant pour l'Eglise, a, dans l'Eglise même,  
Souffert plus d'un outrage et plus d'un anathème."

The poet, to whom religion and morality were by no means empty names, does not leave us in a moment's doubt as to the tendency of his opinions and sympathies.<sup>1</sup>

Judging from antecedent facts, from the characteristic genius of Frenchmen for the epistolary style, from the discursive ease and finish of Boileau, and from his evident admiration for Horace, whom he has imitated in the three special directions in which his somewhat unbending muse permitted him to follow his master, we might have expected that the *Epîtres* of Boileau would be the strongest and most elegant productions of the poet. Probably it will be as a rule admitted that this description faithfully applies to them. But we must at once allow that they are undoubtedly inferior

Plein du feu qu'en son cœur souffla l'esprit divin,  
Il terrassa Pélage, il foudroya Calvin ;  
De tous les faux docteurs confondit la morale.  
Mais pour fruit de son zèle, on l'a vu rebuté,  
En cent lieux opprimé par leur noire cabale ;  
Errant, pauvre, banni, proscrit, persécuté ;  
Et même par sa mort leur fureur mal éteinte  
N'aurait jamais laissé ses cendres en repos,  
Si Dieu lui même ici de son ouaille sainte  
A ces lours dévorants n'avait caché les os."

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the satirist would be even more personally bitter, as when he wrote—

" La figure de Pellisson  
Est une figure effroyable :  
Mais quoique ce vilain garçon  
Soit plus laid qu'un singe et qu'un diable  
Sapho lui trouve des appas ;  
Mais je ne m'en étonne pas,  
Car chacun aime son semblable."

It was upon Sapho (Mademoiselle de Scudéry) that Boileau was most severe in his *Dialogue des Héros des Romans*, a lively and telling parody of the language of the *Pays du Tendre*. Or take the cruel verses which he wrote on the husband of la Champmeslé, the actress whom Racine taught, whom La Fontaine loved, and whom Boileau himself had visited, and of which we can only give the first three lines :—

" De six amants contents et non jaloux,  
Qui tour à tour servaient Madame Claude,  
Le moins volage était Jean, son époux."

to the *Epistles* of Horace. In language, setting model against model, the Frenchman compares favourably with the Roman. In connection and sequence they display the more balanced mind, the more sensible character of the two. But in that subtle variety of thought and exquisite flavour of treatment for which the author of the *Epistles* is famous, Boileau is unmistakably his second. The most admired of the latter's *Epîtres* is the fourth, written in 1672, in which he celebrates the passage over the Rhine and the conquest of Holland, but humorously complains that the king takes places for which it is difficult to find a rhyme, and expresses a wish that Louis were fighting "nearer to Asia," where more melodious names are to be found. We shall only give the opening lines of this *Epître*, which were dedicated to "the king :"—

"In vain my Muse, always ready to praise you,  
Has a score of times attempted the conquest of Holland ;  
That country, of which a hundred cities have not been  
    able to resist you,  
Great king, is not so easy to be overcome in verse.  
The harsh and barbarous names of the towns which you  
    take  
Present on all sides only eccentric syllables ;  
And, with startled ears, we must, from the Yssel,  
Run as far as Texel, to find a suitable word ;  
Yes, everywhere each place possesses a name  
Which holds out against poetry, and destroys its  
    harmony ;  
And who can without shuddering attack Woerden ?  
What verse would not halt at the mere name of Heusden ?  
What muse, however ready to rhyme in every spot,  
Would dare to approach the shores of the Zuyder-sea ?  
How can one in happy verse besiege Doesburg,  
Zutphen, Wageningen, Harderwyk, Knotzenburg ?  
There is not a single fort amongst those which you take  
    by hundreds



Which cannot delay a versifier six weeks ;  
 And everywhere on the Waal, as well as on the Leck,  
 Verse is routed, and the poet is nonplussed." <sup>1</sup>

The mock-heroic poem *Le Lutrin* has been called a triumph of versification, and is admirable for its conception and sustained execution. If any Frenchman could have written a lofty epic, we are tempted to say that it would have been Boileau ; for no one has written finer episodes, and no one has shown a better command of the principles of epic construction. But the special gift and facility which made him admire and imitate Horace instead of Virgil, made him a writer of satires and epistles instead of an epic. This simply amounts to saying that Boileau was a satirist, with all the prominent features of the national genius ; and no true satirist has been a true epic poet. If Boileau had written a *Pucelle*, he would not have been a Chapelain ; but, happily for France, the *Pucelle* did not tempt him. Yet he wrote the *Lutrin*, and the *Lutrin* is at least epically treated. It consists of six books or cantos,

<sup>1</sup> " En vain, pour te louer, ma muse toujours prête  
 Vingt fois de la Hollande a tenté la conquête :  
 Ce pays, où cent murs n'ont pu te résister,  
 Grand roi, n'est pas en vers si facile à dompter.  
 Des villes que tu prends les noms durs et barbares  
 N'offrent de toutes parts que syllabes bizarres ;  
 Et l'oreille effrayée, il faut, depuis l'Issel,  
 Pour trouver un bon mot, courir jusqu'au Tessel.  
 Oui, partout de son nom chaque place munie,  
 Tient bon contre le vers, en détruit l'harmonie.  
 Et qui peut sans frémir aborder Woerden ?  
 Quel vers ne tomberait au seul nom de Heusden ?  
 Quelle muse à rimer en tous lieux disposée  
 Oserait approcher des bords du Zuiderzée ?  
 Comment en vers heureux assiéger Doësbourg,  
 Zutphen, Wageningen, Harderwic, Knotzenbourg ?  
 Il n'est fort, entre ceux que tu prends par centaines,  
 Qui ne puisse arrêter un rimeur six semaines :  
 Et partout sur le Whal, ainsi que sur le Leck,  
 Le vers est en déroute, et le poète à sec."

and originated, as Boileau himself states in the preface, through "a petty quarrel that happened in one of the most celebrated churches of Paris (la Sainte Chapelle) between the treasurer and the master of the choir. That fact is true, and that is all. The rest is mere fiction from the beginning to the end, and all the actors in it are not only invented but industriously drawn, quite opposite to the true character of the ministers of that church." In this poem the master of the choir is depicted as forward and encroaching, and as having endeavoured to invade the rights and privileges of the treasurer. The latter, not brooking this, bethought himself of setting up again in the choir a sort of large lectern (*Lutrin*), which the first had removed. Hence the cause of the quarrel which forms the subject of the *Lutrin*. We will give as a specimen the lines in which are described how, after Brontin, l'Amour, and Boitrude, three partisans of the treasurer, had set out in the darkness of night, to set up again the lectern, Sloth was roused by a cry of Discord, and made a speech to Night.

"The moon, who spied from heaven their haughty mien,  
Withdrew on their behalf her peaceful light,  
Then Discord smiled, and when they caught her sight,  
Uttered a cry of joy which pierced the skies.  
The air, which groaned at the dread goddess' shriek,  
Speeds far as Cîteaux there to waken Sloth.  
There she within a dormitory dwells ;  
The careless Pleasures gambol all around :  
One, in a corner, kneads the Canon's fat ;  
Another, laughing, grinds the monks' vermilion :  
Indulgence serves her with devoted looks,  
And on her Sleep her poppies ever pours.  
That evening twice as much—yet all in vain ;  
Sloth at the noise awakens in alarm :  
When Night, e'er her dark mantle wraps the world,  
Wounds her anew with a disastrous tale,

Tells of the treasurer's recent enterprise,  
How, 'neath the holy Chapel's sacred walls,  
She saw three warriors, enemies to peace,  
March 'neath the shelter of her sable cloak ;  
And Discord threatens there more vast to grow ;  
To-morrow dawn will see a desk appear,  
Raised by a crowd of restive mutineers ;  
Thus heaven wrote it in the book of fate.  
At this sad tale, closed by a deep-drawn sigh,  
Sloth, all in tears, half-raised upon her arm,  
Opens a languid eye, and with faint voice  
Lets fall these words, broke off a score of times :  
' O Night ! what hast thou said ? what fiend on earth  
Breathes into all hearts fatigue and war ?  
Ah ! where has fled that time, that happy time,  
When kings the style of ' slothful ' highly prized,  
Slept on their throne, and served me unabashed,  
Trusting their sceptre to some mayor or count ?  
No busy care approached their peaceful court ;  
By night they rested, all the day they slept ;  
Only in spring, when Flora in the plains  
Silenced the noisy breathings of the winds,  
Four harnessed oxen with slow tranquil pace,  
Through streets of Paris dragged the lazy king.  
That pleasant age is gone. Th' unpitying heaven  
Has set upon the throne an ever-active prince. . . .  
When by that prince, to distant exile driven,  
The Church, at least, I thought would shelter me ;  
E'en there my hope to reign unscared was vain :  
Monks, abbés, priors, arm themselves against me. . . .  
And now a desk will turn all upside down,  
And drives me forth from this loved home again !  
Thou kind and sombre comrade of my rest,  
To such black forfeits wilt thou lend thy shade ?  
Ah Night ! if in the arms of love so oft  
I taught thee pleasures, which I hide from Day,  
At least allow not . . . At this word o'ercome,  
Sloth feels her tongue lie frozen in her mouth,

And, tired of talking, 'neath the effort sank,  
Sighed, stretched her arms, and shut her eyes, and slept." <sup>1</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> " La lune, qui du ciel voit leur démarche altière,  
Retire en leur faveur sa paisible lumière.  
La Discorde en sourit, et, les suivant des yeux,  
De joie, en les voyant, pousse un cri dans les cieux.  
L'air, qui gémit du cri de l'horrible déesse,  
Va jusque dans Cîteaux réveiller la Mollesse.  
C'est là qu'en un dortoir elle fait son séjour.  
Les Plaisirs nonchalants folâtrent à l'entour :  
L'un pétrit dans un coin l'embonpoint des chanoines,  
L'autre broie en riant le vermillon des moines.  
La Volupté la sert avec des yeux dévots,  
Et toujours le Sommeil lui verse des pavots.  
Ce soir, plus que jamais, en vain il les redouble.  
La Mollesse à ce bruit se réveille, se trouble ;  
Quand la Nuit, qui déjà va tout envelopper,  
D'un funeste récit vient encor la frapper,  
Lui conte du prélat l'entreprise nouvelle :  
Au pied des murs sacrés d'une sainte chapelle,  
Elle a vu trois guerriers, ennemis de la paix,  
Marcher à la faveur de ses voiles épais ;  
La Discorde en ces lieux menace de s'accroître ;  
Demain avec l'aurore un lutrin va paraître,  
Qui doit y soulever en peuple de mutins ;  
Ainsi le ciel l'écrit au livre des Destins,  
A ce triste discours, qu'un long soupir achève,  
La Mollesse, en pleurant, sur un bras se relève,  
Ouvre un œil languissant, et, d'une faible voix,  
Laisse tomber ces mots qu'elle interrompt vingt fois :  
' O Nuit, que m'as-tu dit ? quel démon sur la terre  
Souffle dans tous les cœurs la fatigue et la guerre ?  
Hélas ! qu'est devenu ce temps, cet heureux temps  
Où les rois s'honoraient du nom de sainéants,  
S'endormaient sur le trône, et, me servant sans honte,  
Laisaient leur sceptre aux mains ou d'un maire ou d'un comte !  
Aucun soin n'approchait de leur paisible cour ;  
On reposait la nuit, on dormait tout le jour.  
Seulement au printemps, quand Flore dans les plaines  
Faisait taire des vents les bruyantes haleines,  
Quatre bœufs attelés, d'un pas tranquille et lent,  
Promenaient dans Paris le monarque indolent.  
Ce doux siècle n'est plus. Le Ciel impitoyable  
A placé sur le trône un prince infatigable. . . .  
Je croyais, loin des lieux d'où ce prince m'exile,  
Que l'Eglise du moins m'assurait un asile ;



Great power of language, honesty of purpose, delicate raillery, elegance of diction, accurate allegory, and often subtle flattery, distinguish Boileau's style, whilst his character stands out favourably amongst the men who surrounded him. Sarcastic only when writing, but always willing to aid even his enemies, facile of conversation, and far from morose in daily intercourse—except during the latter part of his life—never denying a friend—and completely deserving the description which an English poet has given of one of his heroes, “truest friend and noblest foe”—seldom humbling himself merely before the great, not even before the king, he appears to me the model of the literary men of his age. He was held in great consideration by his fellow-countrymen during his lifetime, and by some of the most eminent literary Englishmen; but he is not generally held in the same estimation at present, at least in France, as he was before. Can it be that he did not sacrifice enough on the altar of Eros, or may the cause be found in the appellation “Law-giver of Parnassus” which he received in former times, and the special dislike the majority of Frenchmen have to all kinds of lawgivers?<sup>1</sup>

Mais en vain j'espérais y régner sans effroi :  
 Moines, abbés, prieurs, tout s'arme contre moi. . . .  
 Et voici qu'un lutrin prêt à tout renverser  
 D'un séjour si chéri vient encor me chasser !  
 O toi, de mon repos compagne aimable et sombre,  
 A de si noirs forfaits prêteras-tu ton ombre ?  
 Ah ! Nuit, si tant de fois dans les bras de l'amour,  
 Je t'admis au plaisir que je cachais au jour,  
 Du moins ne permets pas. . . ' La Mollesse oppressée  
 Dans sa bouche à ce mot sent sa langue glacée,  
 Et, lasse de parler, succombant sous l'effort,  
 Soupire, étend les bras, ferme l'œil, et s'endort.” *Le Lutrin*, Canto ii.

<sup>1</sup> Pope, in *An Essay on Criticism*, gives a rather odd reason why classical criticism does not flourish in England.

“ . . . Critic learning flourished most in France ;  
 The rules, a nation born to serve, obeys ;  
 And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.

## § 2. RACINE.

The genius of Jean Racine<sup>1</sup> was no doubt of a far higher order than Boileau's, but his worldly career had much in common with that of the great satirist and critic. If I had been guided simply by considerations of talent, rather than by those of convenience and literary significance, it might have been necessary to speak of Racine in connection with his fellow-dramatists Corneille and Molière, with the former of whom he directly challenges comparison, and united with whom he constitutes a dramatic triumvirate such as the world has never seen eclipsed. But the intimate friendship of Boileau and Racine was more than ordinarily significant; it sanctions their juxtaposition in the pages of a literary chronicle, being, indeed, only the outward demonstration of their sympathy of taste and judgment, and of the influence which they exerted upon each other. In worldly matters, in versatility and fertility of expression, Boileau was the strongest talent of the two; and if his aims and ambitions were rendered more lofty by the friendship which he so constantly cherished, he certainly nerved and supported Racine in his efforts to secure the recognition of the public. Thus the two master-pieces of Racine's tragic muse, *Phédre* and *Athalie*, were both received with misgiving—the first especially by the more courtly part of the audience, the latter especially by the bulk of Parisian playgoers; but in both he had the warm advocacy and openly expressed admiration of Boileau,

But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despised,  
And kept unconquer'd, and uncivilised;  
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold  
We still defied the Romans, as of old."

who was his best and most judicious friend, though a few years his junior. When the dramatist gave too great play to the natural incisiveness, if not bitterness, of his satirical mood, it was Boileau who tempered and restrained him. When Racine, enthusiastic for the stage, entered upon a war of words in defence of the drama against his friends and teachers at Port-Royal—the venerable Nicole being his principal antagonist—it was Boileau who reminded him that it was hardly becoming to expose his teachers to public ridicule, Boileau who induced him to do greater justice to his own heart, and to bear less hardly upon those who differed from him. And when Racine, disgusted and hurt by the inconsiderate harshness of the selfish Louis XIV., retired altogether from the life of the court, it was Boileau who remained his best and constant friend. Who can say how much of sympathy for his life-long companion mingled in the feeling which made Boileau resolve, upon the death of Racine, that he would go no more to Versailles, inasmuch as “he could praise no longer”?

Racine was the son of a controller of a salt office at Ferté-Milon, an important post, and one which became gradually more and more important and onerous up to the date of the Revolution. He resembled Corneille in the possession of a devotional and idealistic turn of mind, and his earlier years were given to the study of theology, and to the exercise of religion. He was a friend of the Arnaulds, and for some time a pupil of the community of Port-Royal. When he resolved to pursue a more secular and literary career, he did not throw off the graver inclinations and tendencies which gave solidity to his character, but—again like Corneille—he has left abundant proof that the ascendancy of religion was maintained in his heart to the last. Besides his dramas founded upon the sacred narratives, he published a series of *Cantiques Spirituels*. Con-

templative and retiring by disposition, he was a warm lover of nature, preferring the peace and quietness of moral scenes to the bustle and excitement of town. La Fontaine,<sup>1</sup> speaking of the *réunions* held in Boileau's house in the *Rue du Vieux-Colombier*, says on one occasion "Acante (Racine) proposed a walk somewhere out of town, at a considerable distance, and where there were few people. . . . He greatly loved gardens, flowers, shady places. Polyphile (La Fontaine) resembled him in this ; but one may say that the latter loved everything. These feelings, which filled their hearts with a certain tenderness, extended to their writings, and constituted their chief characteristic." It is perhaps more distinctly the case with the works of La Fontaine than with those of Racine ; but we need not conclude on that account that La Fontaine's love of the beauties of nature was stronger than Racine's.

The first drama by which the poet challenged the appreciation of his fellow-countrymen was the *Thébaïde*, published in his twenty-fifth year, in which the rivalry of the two brothers Eteocles and Polynices is described. In this play the brothers are killed, their mother Jocaste, their two cousins Hemon and Ménéécée are dead, and the male survivor Créon, the traitor, offers his hand to the sole female surviving personage, Antigone, his niece. The latter refuses, and Créon, after a terrific monologue, says that "he is going to seek some rest in the infernal regions." This tragedy has scarcely any merit, except for some verses which are palpably imitated from Corneille. It was succeeded by *Alexandré*, another tragedy elegantly written, which was very successful, although it was also distinctly modelled after one of Corneille's. This play wants action. Porus, king of India, is already conquered in the third act, and remains arguing until the end of the fifth act with Alexander, who behaves mag-

<sup>1</sup> *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*, bk. i.



nanimously, and replaces Porus on the throne. This conduct is the more to be admired because the king of India says that his "name can raise up new enemies, and awaken a hundred kings, asleep in their chains." Hephæstion, the favourite of Alexander, acts like one of the most elegant courtiers of Louis XIV. ; and in his discourse with Cléofile, the sister of Taxile, an Indian king, rival to Porus, he states that he is "the faithful confidant of the beautiful flame" of his master, and declares that Alexander, "conqueror of so many princes," has only fought them to draw nearer to her, but still afraid not to be master of her heart. *Andromaque*, which was Racine's next tragedy, gave ample evidence of the groove in which his dramatic genius was going to run. He had borrowed the idea from Euripides, and from some verses in the third book of the *Æneid*, which tell how Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, and a son of Achilles, fell in love with Andromache, the widow of Hector, whom he abandons at last to marry Hermione, beloved by Orestes. In the French play Pyrrhus, on the point of marrying Andromache, is murdered by Orestes. When the assassin presents himself before Hermione, who had instigated him to revenge her, she turns away with horror from the guilty man, who is destroyed by the avenging furies. Pyrrhus is moreover the guardian of Astyanax, the youthful son of Hector, and in order to obtain the hand of the mother he threatens to deliver up the boy to the Greeks, who had sent Orestes for that very purpose. This play is undoubtedly very dramatic, and deserves all the success it obtained. Pyrrhus, with his alternations of rage and love, one moment menacing Andromache, and the next moment telling her "that he will punish the Greeks for her sufferings and his," and that "in less time than the Greeks have taken to destroy Troy, he can raise it up, and crown her son on its walls," is indeed the passionate son of the impetuous Achilles. Orestes appears

"melancholy mad," and pre-ordained to suffer; a mild Hamlet let loose at the court of Louis XIV., who argues as follows with his friend Pylades :

" My innocence at last begins to weigh me down.  
I do not know what unjust power at all times  
Leaves crime at peace and pursues innocence.  
From whatever side I consider myself,  
I see nothing but misfortunes which the gods condemn.  
Let us deserve their anger, let us justify their hatred,  
And let the fruit of the crime precede the punishment."<sup>1</sup>

He intends to carry off Hermione, and proposes to Pylades to abandon him; the latter does not argue, but, like a true friend, simply says, "Come on, my lord, let us carry off Hermione;" Orestes proves that he deserves such an affection by accepting his offer and by asking his friend to forgive "an unfortunate man who loses all that he loves, whom everybody hates and who hates himself." Hermione, stirred now by affection, now by detestation for Pyrrhus, is a remarkable creation. Her intense hatred is only equalled by her passionate love. She at one moment declares that Pyrrhus is "charming, faithful in fact, nothing is wanting to his glory," and at another time rages and says, "What pleasure would it be to me to avenge myself my injury, to draw back my arm, stained with the blood of the perfidious wretch! . . . my vengeance is in vain, if he ignores, whilst dying, that it is I who kill him." Her reproaches to the youthful monarch of Epirus are natural; and when she tells

<sup>1</sup> " Mon innocence enfin commence à me peser.  
Je ne sais, de tout temps, quelle injuste puissance  
Laisse le crime en paix et poursuit l'innocence.  
De quelque part sur moi que je tourne les yeux,  
Je ne vois que malheurs que condamnent les dieux.  
Méritons leur courroux, justifions leur haine,  
Et que le fruit du crime en précède la peine."

him that he does not listen to her, that he is anxious to be with Andromache, when she says : " You count the moments which you lose with me ;" when she speaks of Pyrrhus' beloved, as " that Trojan woman," we feel that the character of the jealous princess is true and taken from the life. And when Orestes, having murdered Pyrrhus, presents himself before her to claim his reward, she forgets that she has induced him to commit so vile a crime, and shrieks out in her passion,

" Speak, who has made you the arbiter of his fate ?

Why did you murder him ? What has he done to you, why did you do so ?

Who told you to do it ?"

Andromache is a true mother, who sacrifices everything, her pride, her delicacy, and at last herself, for her son, " an unfortunate child who does not yet know that Pyrrhus is his master, and that he is the son of Hector." She humbles herself before her rival Hermione, she implores Pyrrhus, and tries to move his pity and generosity in heart-stirring language ; and when at last she finds that everything is in vain, she resolves to marry him, and then to stab herself ; and begs her confidante to " speak to her son every day of the virtues of his father ;" and then utters the touching words, " and sometimes also speak to him of his mother."

To my mind *Andromaque*, in spite of its faults, and it has many,<sup>1</sup> is the most living, the most Shakspearian of all Racine's tragedies. Others are more perfect in diction, have a more interesting plot, a more elegant versification, but in

<sup>1</sup> For example such conceits as :

Brûlé de plus de feux que je n'en allumai,

or

Prenez une victime

Que les Scythes auraient dérobée à vos coups,

Si j'en avais trouvé d'aussi cruels que vous.

this play I imagine I can see the soul breathing under the mask of the stage-personages, and can hear passion vibrating in the very lines they speak. Was Racine at the time of his writing this play in love with Madame Duparc, who, when *Andromaque* was acted (1667), was thirty-four years old, and had been three years a widow? She was very handsome,<sup>1</sup> and Racine was only twenty-eight years old.<sup>2</sup> He induced her to leave his friend Molière's troupe, to go and play the heroine of his tragedy at the hôtel de Bourgogne—which was the cause of his quarrel with Molière. Did he feel these pangs of jealousy, that agony of disappointment, that alternation of love and aversion of which Pyrrhus and Hermione are the embodiments? An author ought not always to be identified with his creations, and—to speak only of the characters of *Andromaque*—Racine can never have felt the maternal sentiments of Andromache, but I am yet of opinion that it is in this play that Racine, most likely, emitted the expression of his innermost personal feelings.

Racine followed next the precedent of Corneille, and tempted the comic muse, by publishing, in 1668, an excellent farce, *Les Plaideurs*, after the manner of Aristophanes, dealing with the mania of an old judge, Dandin, for pronouncing sentence, as well as with the fondness of the Countess de Pimbresche and Chicaneau for law and lawsuits. The

<sup>1</sup> Robinet speaks of her "queenly bearing" in his *Lettre posthume* of Dec. 15th, 1668, the year of her death.

<sup>2</sup> In Clement, *La Police sous Louis XIV.*, p. 178, I find some confirmation of my supposition. The infamous poisoner La Voisin declared "that she had known Mademoiselle Duparc, the female comedian, that she had visited her during fourteen years, and that her stepmother, named de Gordo (de Gorle) had told her that it was Racine who had poisoned her." I do not intend to insinuate that this accusation was true, but simply to suggest that the intimacy between Racine and Mademoiselle Duparc must have been of common notoriety, otherwise such a wretch as La Voisin would not even have thought of bringing a similar accusation.



opening speech of Petit-Jean, the servant of the judge, will exemplify the skill of the poet in his lighter mood, wherein he may be compared, not altogether unfavourably, with his contemporary Molière :

“ Upon my word ! the man who trusts in the future is very mad :

He who laughs on Friday shall weep on Sunday.

Last year a judge took me into his service ;

He had had me up from Amiens to make a Swiss of me.

All these Normans were pleased to divert themselves with us ;

But they say you must do at Rome as they do at Rome.

Although I am a Picard I am a very good fellow,

And I made a noise just like the rest.

All the biggest gentlemen spoke to me with their hats off :

And called me at every word ‘ Monsieur de Petit-Jean ! ’

But without money honour is but a distemper.

Upon my word ! I was a mere stage door-keeper :

It was no use to knock and take off their hats to me ;

They didn’t get into our house without paying.

No money no entrance ; and my door was shut.

It is true that I gave some of it to my master :

We made up our accounts sometimes ; it was my charge

To keep the house in candles and in hay ;

But I lost nothing by it. At any rate

I would have kept the house in straw to boot.

’Tis a pity ! his heart was too much in his business :

Every day he was the first and last on the bench,

And often all by himself ; if he was to be believed

He would have slept there without bite or sup.

I sometimes said to him : ‘ Monsieur Perrin Dandin,

Really, you rise every day too early in the morning ;

He who wants to travel far is careful of his steed :

**Eat**, drink, sleep, and let us not spend all in a day ! ’

He heeded me not. He has kept awake so long,

And done so much, that they say his wits are gone wool-gathering.

He wants to judge us all one after the other ;

He is ever muttering some gibberish  
 Of which I don't understand a word. He insists, nolens  
 volens,  
 On sleeping in his gown and square cap.  
 He had his cock's head cut off, in a rage,  
 For having woke him later than usual :  
 He said that a litigant, whose cause was going wrong,  
 Had given a bribe to that poor animal.  
 After this pretty sentence, the poor man may do what he will,  
 His son will let no one speak to him about business ;  
 He makes us watch him day and night, and closely too ;  
 Else it would be no use, and my master would be at his  
 cases.

Heaven knows if he is quick to escape from us.  
 As for me, I sleep no more : so I am growing thin ;  
 It is a pity. I stretch myself, and do nothing but yawn,  
 But, let who will keep awake, here is my pillow.  
 On my word ! I must give myself a treat this night ;  
 You wrong nobody by sleeping in the street.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This speech in the original is full of idioms and proverba.

“ Ma foi ! sur l'avenir bien fou qui se fiera :  
 Tel qui rit vendredi, dimanche pleurera.  
 Un juge, l'an passé, me prit a son service ;  
 Il m'avait fait venir d'Amiens pour être suisse.  
 Tous ces Normands voulaient se divertir de nous ;  
 On apprend à hurler, dit l'autre, avec les loups.  
 Tout Picard que j'étais, j'étais un bon apôtre,  
 Et je faisais claquer mon fouet tout comme un autre.  
 Tous les plus gros monsieurs me parlaient chapeau bas .  
 Monsieur de Petit Jean, ah ! gros comme le bras.  
 Mais sans argent l'honneur n'est qu'une maladie.  
 Ma foi ! j'étais un franc portier de comédie :  
 On avait beau heurter et m'ôter son chapeau ;  
 On n'entrait point chez nous sans graisser le marteau.  
 Point d'argent, point de suisse ; et ma porte était close.  
 Il est vrai qu'à monsieur j'en rendais quelque chose  
 Nous comptions quelquefois ; on me donnait le soi  
 De fournir la maison de chandelle et de foin ;  
 Mais je n'y perdais rien. Enfin, vaille que vaille,  
 J'aurais sur le marché fort bien fourni la paille.  
 C'est dommage ! il avait le cœur trop au métier :  
 Tous les jours, le premier aux plaids, et le dernier,

In Racine's next tragedy, *Britannicus* (1669), the rivalry between Nero and Britannicus for the love of Junia are faithfully and poetically delineated, and Agrippina, Burrhus, and Narcissus are described, as Tacitus has depicted them ; the two latter representing virtue and vice struggling to obtain possession of the mind of the youthful emperor, and the freedman finally triumphing and poisoning Britannicus by command of Nero. Listen for a moment to the advice Narcissus gives to Nero, who is still hesitating, and acknowledges that he is afraid that Rome shall call him a poisoner and parricide :—

“For a long time the Romans are accustomed to the yoke ;  
They worship the hand that holds them enchained.  
You shall always see them eager to please you :  
Their apt slavishness has disgusted Tiberius.

Et bien souvent tout seul ; si l'on l'eût voulu croire  
Il s'y serait couché sans manger et sans boire.  
Je lui disais parfois : ‘ Monsieur Perrin Dandin,  
Tout franc, vous vous levez, tous le jours trop matin.  
Qui veut voyager loin ménage sa monture :  
Buvez, mangez, dormez, et faisons feu qui dure.’  
Il n'en a tenu compte. Il a si bien veillé  
Et si bien fait, qu'on dit que son timbre est brouillé  
Il nous veut tous juger les uns après les autres ;  
Il marmotte toujours certaines patenôtres  
Où je ne comprends rien. Il veut, bon gré mal gré.  
Ne se coucher qu'en robe et qu'en bonnet carré.  
Il fit couper la tête à son coq, de colère,  
Pour l'avoir éveillé plus tard qu' à l'ordinaire :  
Il disait qu'un plaideur dont l'affaire allait mal  
Avait graissé la patte à ce pauvre animal.  
Depuis ce bel arrêt, le pauvre homme a beau faire,  
Son fils ne souffre plus qu'on lui parle d'affaire.  
Il nous le fait garder jour et nuit, et de près :  
Autrement, serviteur, et mon homme est aux plaids.  
Pour s'échapper de nous, Dieu sait s'il est allégre.  
Pour moi, je ne dors plus : aussi je deviens maigre,  
C'est pitié ! Je m'entends, et ne fais que bâiller.  
Mais, veille qui voudra, voici mon oreiller.  
Ma foi ! pour cette nuit il faut que je m'en donne ;  
Pour dormir dans la rue on n'offense personne.”

I myself, clothed in a borrowed rank,  
 Which Claudius gave me when he freed me,  
 A hundred times, during my past career, I have seen  
 Their patience tried, but not wearied.  
 You fear the black stain of a poisoning ?  
 Slay the brother, abandon the sister,  
 And Rome, lavishing victims on the altars  
 Even if they were innocent, will discover their crimes,  
 And you'll hear them call these days ill omen'd  
 On which the sister and brother were born."<sup>1</sup>

This is beautiful ; what is less so, is that Racine, probably stung by the comparative small success of this play, published it with a preface—which, however, he afterwards suppressed—in which he distinctly attacked Corneille, and says that to please the public he ought to have brought on the stage “an intoxicated hero who wantonly wishes his mistress to hate him, a Lacedemonian, a fine talker, a conqueror who only speaks of love, and a woman who gives lessons of pride to conquerors.” He farther says that Terence mentions “an aged malevolent poet who came even to intrigue and to recruit votes against him, up to the very hour when they represented his comedies.”<sup>2</sup> It has also

<sup>1</sup> “ Au joug depuis longtemps ils se sont façonnés  
 Ils adorent la main qui les tient enchainés.  
 Vous les verrez toujours ardents à vous complaire :  
 Leur prompt servitude a fatigué Tibère.  
 Moi-même, revêtu d'un pouvoir emprunté,  
 Que je reçus de Claude avec la liberté,  
 J'ai cent fois, dans le cours de ma gloire passée  
 Tenté leur patience, et ne l'ai point lassée.  
 D'un empoisonnement vous craignez la noirceur ?  
 Faites périr le frère, abandonnez la sœur,  
 Rome, sur les autels prodiguant les victimes,  
 Fussent ils innocents, leur trouvera des crimes.  
 Vous verrez mettre au rang des jours infortunés  
 Ceux où jadis la sœur et le frère sont nés.”

<sup>2</sup> Whom the “intoxicated hero” was meant for is not known—La Harpe says it was intended for Attila. The others are hints against Corneille's tragedies *La Mort de Pompée*, *Sertorius*, and *Agésilas*.



been stated that a hint of Racine about Nero "making a spectacle of himself before the Romans," prevented Louis XIV. from dancing afterwards in *ballets*; but this is a mistake, for *Britannicus* was first acted in 1669, and the *Grand Monarque* made his last appearance as a dancer on the stage at Versailles in the *Divertissement Royal*, given in the year 1670.

*Bérénice* (1670) which was undertaken at the suggestion of Henrietta of England, in rivalry with Corneille, depicts the struggle of Titus to sacrifice his ambition to his love for Bérénice, and his secret rivalry with Antiochus. This piece was a great success, and had forty representations; a very considerable number for those days. In spite of its elegant versification, this tragedy is rather lackadaisical and affected; there are very few natural sayings placed in the mouth of the different personages, and the grandiloquent style often mars what might have been said more simply and effectually. The ending is peculiar, for neither the one nor the other of the princes obtains the hand of the heroine, who calmly says, "let us three serve as an example to the universe, of the most tender and unfortunate love, of which it can remember the painful history." In this play there is a curious coincidence—if it be one. When Titus informs Bérénice that it is against the laws and the will of the Roman people that he should marry her, Bérénice replies, "My lord, you are an emperor, and you shed tears." Tradition affirms that Maria de Mancini, a niece of the Cardinal Mazarin, applied almost the same words to the youthful Louis XIV., who was in love with her, and obliged to bid her an eternal farewell.

*Bajazet*, represented two years later, suffers from the same fault as *Bérénice*. The Sultan Amurat, on leaving Constantinople to attack Babylon, placed in the hands of the favourite

sultana, Roxane, an order to put to death his brother Bajazet, whom he mistrusts, if the latter gave the least cause for suspicion. The favourite falls in love with Bajazet,—who is himself enamoured of Atalide,—and intends to place him on his brother's throne. But when Roxane discovers Bajazet's passion, she resolves to have him strangled, or, to use Racine's expression, "she gave up his life to the fatal knot." She herself is stabbed by Orcan, the faithful servant of Amurat, "born under the burning sky of the darkest Africans," whilst Atalide, receiving the tidings of her lover's death, plunges a dagger in her own breast. The amount of slaughter in this tragedy is sufficiently Turkish; the personages are scarcely so, and the fine-drawn disputations and arguments about love smack strongly of the court of Louis XIV.; yet the vizir Acomat, who wishes Bajazet to ascend the throne, expresses himself generally like a real Asiatic. He says to his confidant, Osmin,

"You know the usual severity of our sultans;  
One brother seldom allows his brothers to enjoy  
The dangerous honour of being descended from a race  
Which brings them far too near to his rank."

Would one not think these lines were written at the present day? And so seem to me the following, spoken by the same:

"A vizir is always an object of suspicion to the sultans;  
Hardly have they chosen him when they fear their work;  
His spoils are a property they wish to gather,  
And their sorrows never allow us to grow old."

One year after *Bajazet* was represented *Mithridate*, of which the subject is nearly the same as that of Molière's *Miser*, an aged father, the rival of his son; but whilst the comic dramatist only excites our risible faculties, Racine succeeds in making us shed tears. The way in which

the fathers discover the affection of their sons for the object of their love, by pretending to allow the young people to become united, is also the same in both plays. I think that our dramatist has scarcely written anything grander than the speech of Mithridates,<sup>1</sup> in which he expounds his policy to his sons ; and when at last the aged king is brought, fatally wounded, upon the stage, and Monime tells him to “live in order to triumph over a conquered enemy, and to avenge himself,” his answer given with his dying breath, is “It is done, madam, and I have lived.” *Iphigénie en Aulide* shows again a rivalry, but this time between Eriphile and Iphigenia, who both love Achilles. The noble resignation of Iphigenia, who is going to be sacrificed, and is finally spared, as well as the manner in which her mother Clytemnestra endeavours to save her life,<sup>2</sup> is well described ; Agamemnon and Ulysses are decidedly less so, and their language is often inflated. Of the character of this drama let a single passage bear witness, a passage which in itself will fairly illustrate the tragic style of Racine. It is the expression of the daughter’s resignation at the will of her father, even when that will decrees her death :

“ Father,

Trouble yourself no more, you are not betrayed ;

When you command, you shall be obeyed.

My life is your gift ; you wish to take it again ;

Your orders could be understood quite plainly.

With the same look of content, the same submissive heart

Wherewith I accepted the husband you promised me,

I shall know, if it must be, like an obedient victim,

How to offer my innocent head to the knife of Calchas ,

And respecting the blow which you have ordered,

Give back to you all the blood which you have given me.

Yet if this respect, this obedience,

Seem in your eyes worthy of another recompense,

If you pity the grief of a weeping mother,

<sup>1</sup> Act iii. scene 1.

<sup>2</sup> Act iv. scene 4.

I dare to say that, seeing my present condition,  
 Perchance sufficient honours surrounded my life,  
 For me not to wish it to be snatched away from me,  
 Nor that a stern fate, in depriving me of it,  
 Should have assigned its end so close to my birth.  
 Daughter of Agamemnon, I am the first, my lord,  
 Who called you by the sweet name of father ;  
 It was I who, so long the delight of your eyes,  
 Have made you thank the Gods for that name,  
 And for whom, so often lavishing your caresses,  
 You have not scorned to show the weaknesses of a father.  
 Alas ! I took delight in listening to the roll  
 Of the names of the countries which you were going to subdue ;  
 And already, foreseeing the conquest of Ilion,  
 I was anticipating the rejoicings for so grand a triumph.  
 I did not expect that, in order to begin it,  
 My blood would be the first which you should shed.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Mon père,  
 Cessez de vous troubler, vous n'êtes point trahi :  
 Quand vous commanderez, vous serez obéi.  
 Ma vie est votre bien, vous voulez le reprendre ;  
 Vos ordres sans détour pouvaient se faire entendre.  
 D'un œil aussi content, d'un cœur aussi soumis,  
 Que j'acceptais l'époux que vous m'aviez promis,  
 Je saurai, s'il le faut, victime obéissante,  
 Tendre au fer de Calchas une tête innocente ;  
 Et respectant le coup par vous-même ordonné,  
 Vous rendre tout le sang que vous m'avez donné.  
 Si pourtant ce respect, si cette obéissance  
 Paraît digne à vos yeux d'une autre récompense ;  
 Si d'une mère en pleurs vous plaignez les ennuis,  
 J'ose vous dire ici qu'en l'état où je suis  
 Peut-être assez d'honneurs environnaient ma vie,  
 Pour ne pas souhaiter qu'elle me fût ravie,  
 Ni qu'en me l'arrachant, un sévère destin,  
 Si près de ma naissance, en eût marqué la fin.  
 Fille d'Agamemnon, c'est moi qui, la première,  
 Seigneur, vous appelai de ce doux nom de père ;  
 C'est moi qui, si longtemps le plaisir de vos yeux,  
 Vous ai fait de ce nom remercier les dieux,  
 Et pour qui, tant de fois prodiguant vos caresses  
 Vous n'avez point du sang dédaigné les faiblesses.  
 Hélas ! avec plaisir je me faisais conter



*Phædre* was brought out in 1677. It turns upon the passion of Phædra, the wife of Theseus, king of Athens, for her stepson Hippolytus, who, in his turn, loves Aricia. The heroine of the tragedy thinks her husband dead, and when Hippolytus presents himself to condole with her, she betrays her passion, and says that she still loves Theseus, "not such as the infernal regions have seen him . . . but charming, young, carrying all hearts with him . . . such as I see you. He had your gait, your eyes, your manner of speech;" and when her stepson, horror struck, reminds her that Theseus is his father and her husband, her passion overleaps all bounds, and betrays itself, whilst recognising its ignominy. Theseus suddenly comes back, Phædra has been told that Hippolytus loves another, and her confidante Oenone informs the king that his son burns with a criminal love for his stepmother. Theseus thereupon invokes Neptune to avenge him, and when afterwards the youthful prince is driving on the sea-shore, a terrible monster, arising from the waves, frightens the horses, which run away, and kill Hippolytus. Oenone utters a truism,<sup>1</sup> and drowns herself; and Phædra takes poison, after having made a confession of her crime.<sup>2</sup> There are

Tous les noms des pays que vous alliez dompter ;  
Et déjà, d'Iliou présageant la conquête,  
D'un triomphe si beau je préparais la fête.  
Je ne m'attendais pas que, pour le commencer,  
Mon sang fut le premier que vous dussiez verser."

<sup>1</sup> "Ah dieux ! pour la servir j'ai tout fait, tout quitte :

Et j'en reçois ce prix ! je l'ai bien mérité."—*Act iv. sc. 6.*

<sup>2</sup> Dryden, in his preface to *All for Love*, says : The French tragedy "heroes are the most civil people breathing ; but their good breeding seldom extends to a word of sense ; all their wit is in their ceremony ; they want the genius which animates our stage . . . Thus, their Hippolitus is so scrupulous in point of decency, that he will rather expose himself to death than accuse his stepmother to his father . . . But take Hippolitus out of his poetic fit, and I suppose he would think it a wiser part to set the saddle on the right horse, and choose rather to live with the reputation of a plain-spoken honest man, than to die with the infamy of an incestuous villain . . . The poet . . . has . . . transformed the Hippolitus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolyte."

magnificent passages in this tragedy, and the character of Phædra is grandly drawn, but Aricia, Theseus, Hippolytus, and his tutor Theramenes are very feebly sketched; and the speech of the latter describing his pupil's death, though written in fine language, is quite out of place, far too long, and decidedly monotonous. This play was not received as well as Racine thought it deserved to be. This was in part owing to a cabal formed against it by the Duke de Nevers and his clique, who patronised some poetasters—amongst whom Pradon alone need be instanced by name—who pretended to a ridiculous rivalry with the dramatist, and whose works have all but perished from the literary annals of their country. The wound to Racine's susceptibility may have contributed to increase the desire for retirement which he had long felt. From this time, and for no less than twelve years, he withdrew from the stage. He wished to become a Carthusian friar, but gave way to the advice of his friends, and married the daughter of a *trésorier-général* of Amiens, a quiet and pious woman. Shortly after his marriage he was appointed, in conjunction with Boileau, historiographer to the king. He also, through the mediation of Boileau, became reconciled to d'Arnauld and the Port-Royalists, and wrote even later<sup>1</sup> an *Abstract of the History of Port-Royal*. Then his court career began. He went with the king to the siege of Namur, and had often the honour of reading to him. He also edited the works of a child seven years old, the Duke de Maine, the bastard of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, and sketched, at the request of the court, the plan of an opera, *The Fall of Phaëthon*. Yet he was very strict at home with his young family, and on the whole led a peaceful life. The fruits of this calm, of this long silence and abstention, were reaped in 1689 by the publication of *Esther*, a tragedy taken from the Bible, modified according to the taste of the

<sup>1</sup> In 1693.

court, and which was played by the female pupils of the school of Saint-Cyr. The male characters—according to Racine's preface—"were represented by the young ladies, with all the decorum of their sex, which was the easier for them, as in ancient times the Persians and the Jews wore long dresses which reached to the ground;" a remark which smacks strongly of the prudery then infecting Louis XIV.'s court. The king and Madame de Maintenon showed their warmest admiration for this biblical tragedy, and, of course, the rest of the court followed.<sup>1</sup> This admiration was increased by the allusions with which Racine, intentionally or not—and to my mind they were intentional—had strewn his piece. Esther, who was descended from the race proscribed by Haman, was Madame de Maintenon, the grand-daughter of d'Aubigné, whom the king had married in 1684; the haughty Vashti was Madame de Montespan; and the king was, of course, Ahasuerus. The audience were naturally delighted when they heard Esther say, "In a place far removed from profane eyes, all my study and all my care is to form these maidens of Sion; there fleeing from the pride of a diadem, tired of vain honours, and studying myself, I abase myself at the feet of the Eternal, and enjoy the pleasure of being no longer remembered;"<sup>2</sup> or again, when she spoke "of the famous disgrace of the haughty Vashti, whose place I occupy, when the king, enraged with her, drove her from his throne as well as from his bed."<sup>3</sup> How it must have pleased Louis XIV. to hear "I have never looked except with fear upon the august majesty impressed upon his brow!" That Louvois, however, should be sketched under the

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Sévigné says in one of her letters (512), "The king and all the court are delighted with Esther. M. Le Prince (de Condé) shed tears; Madame de Maintenon, and eight Jesuits, amongst whom was father Gaillard, honoured with their presence the last representation."

<sup>2</sup> *Esther*, Act i. scene 1. Of course "the maidens of Sion" were the young ladies brought up at Saint-Cyr.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Act i. scene 1.

name of Haman appears to me exceedingly improbable, for Racine would not have dared to place in his mouth such words as these, "the king knows that he owes me everything, and that, for the sake of his grandeur, I trampled under foot remorse, fear, bashfulness ; that with a heart of stone exerting his authority, I silenced the laws and tortured innocence ; that for his sake, braving the dislike of the Persians, I have cherished, I have sought for their curses ;"<sup>1</sup> nor make any allusion to the revocation of the edict of Nantes, as some critics of the present age have thought. It was not in our dramatist's nature to be so daring ; but that the application of these lines was made is not astonishing. The local colouring has in nowise been preserved ; the versification is masterly ; the choruses are perhaps the most perfect ever written in French, except those of *Athalie*, and *Esther* is sometimes touching, and always interesting.<sup>2</sup>

*Athalie* is based upon the eleventh chapter of the second book of Kings ; and it is rather characteristic of the age of Louis XIV. and of the public for whom it was written, that Racine thought it necessary to give a *résumé* of that chapter in the preface of his tragedy. It was only acted before the king and a very select company by the young ladies of the school of Saint-Cyr, and without any theatrical dresses or scenery, and proved a failure, or at least far from a success. And this cannot be wondered at when we recollect that the utterances of a righteous and just God, as represented in *Athalie*, must have jarred on the ears of the selfish and bigoted Louis XIV., and that such phrases as "the happiness of the wicked passes

<sup>1</sup> *Esther*, Act iii. scene 1.

<sup>2</sup> In some satirical couplets which were written about that time, and which were circulated *sub rosa*, we find Racine called "Hypocrite rimeur, historien trop payé." Of Madame de Maintenon it is said :

" Comme la juive d'autrefois	Mais plus dure que l'autre Esther
Cette Esther qui tient à nos rois,	Pour chasser la foi de ses pères,
Eptonva d'heureuses misères	Elle prend la flamme et le fer."



away like a torrent ;”<sup>1</sup> and such words as the following, addressed by the high priest to the youthful king Joash, must have appeared offensive to the *Grand Monarque* :—

“ You are ignorant of the intoxication of absolute power,  
And of the bewitching voice of cowardly flatterers ;  
Soon they’ll tell you that the holiest laws  
Rule the vile people, but obey kings ;  
That a king has no other restraint but his own will ;  
That he ought to sacrifice everything to his supreme grandeur ;  
That the people is condemned to tears, to labour,  
And must be governed with a rod of iron ;  
That unless it is oppressed, it will oppress sooner or later.”<sup>2</sup>

This language was unseasonable in 1691, when the people, through long suffering, began to murmur, and hence the court disapproved of this tragedy, and the general public followed like the sheep of Panurge. Racine himself thought that he had made a mistake, but Boileau told him that justice would be done to it sooner or later. And justice has been done to it ; and, singular to say, the first who did so was the Regent d’Orleans, who in 1716 ordered this tragedy to be played. From that time up to the present it has been generally considered as the masterpiece of Racine, and most literary men agree with this opinion. I have already said that I considered *Andromaque* the play of Racine in which to my mind the upheaving of personal passions and feelings is perceptible ; but *Athalie* was written when the author was more

<sup>1</sup> Le bonheur des méchants comme un torrent s’écoule.—*Athalie*, ii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> “ De l’absolu pouvoir vous ignorez l’ivresse,  
Et des lâches flatteurs la voix enchanteresse,  
Bientôt ils vous diront que les plus saintes lois  
Maîtresses du vil peuple, obéissent aux rois ;  
Qu’un roi n’a d’autre frein que sa volonté même ;  
Qu’il doit immoler tout à sa grandeur suprême ;  
Qu’aux larmes, au travail, le peuple est condamné,  
Et d’un sceptre de fer veut être gouverné ;  
Que, s’il n’est opprimé, tôt ou tard il opprime.”

*Athalie*, iv. 3.

than fifty years old, and overflowing with religious sentiments ; when he had studied his Bible and renewed his intimacy with the Port-Royalists. It is perfect in versification, finished in character-sketches, well conceived, marvellously executed, and enriched with such choruses, that though we miss the sensuous passion of his first successful play, the religious feeling so percolates the whole, without becoming obtrusive or overpowering, that I have no hesitation in calling it the most perfect of all French scriptural tragedies. It is, I imagine, also the only French tragedy, which is full of bustle and action. It does not play in a portico or in a palace, but in the Jewish Temple, crowded with Levites and priests, all anxious to show their zeal for their God. To give an adequate idea of its beauties I should have to quote nearly the whole. I shall give a single extract, not to show the nearly biblical grandeur of some of the speeches, but a part of the scene where Athaliah meets Joash in the temple, in the presence of Abner and Jehosheba, and interrogates him ; and this in order to prove how easily Racine could write in a natural tone of conversation, in spite of the difficulty of the metre.

*Athaliah (to Joash).* What is every day your occupation ?

*Joash.* I worship the Lord ; they explain his law to me ;  
They teach me to read in his divine book ;  
And already I begin to write it with my own hand.

*Athaliah.* What does this law tell you ?

*Joash.* That God wishes to be loved ;  
That he avenges, sooner or later, his holy name  
blasphemed,  
That he is the defender of the timid orphan ;  
That he opposes the haughty and punishes the  
homicide.

*Athaliah.* I understand ; but what is the occupation  
Of all who are assembled in this place ?

*Joash.* They praise and they bless God.

*Athaliah.* Does God will that they should always pray, and contemplate him?

*Joash.* Every profane exercise is banished from his temple.

*Athaliah.* What then are your pleasures?

*Joash.* Sometimes at the altar

I present to the high priest the incense or the salt;

I hear the infinite praises of God sung;

I see the magnificent order of his ceremonies.

*Athaliah.* What! You have no more agreeable pastime?

I pity the sad fate of a child like you,

Come into my palace and behold my glory.

*Joash.* I! I should lose the remembrance of God's kindnesses!

*Athaliah.* No! I do not wish to constrain you to forget him.

*Joash.* You do not pray to him.

*Athaliah.* You can pray to him.

*Joash.* I should, however, see another deity invoked.

*Athaliah.* I have my God whom I serve; you shall serve yours: They are two powerful gods.

*Joash.* Mine is to be feared.

He alone is God, madam; and yours is nothing.

*Athaliah.* When with me many pleasures will present themselves.

*Joash.* The happiness of the wicked passes away like a torrent.

*Athaliah.* Who are these wicked?

*Jehosheba.* Madam! excuse

A child . . .

*Athaliah* (to *Jehosheba*). I love to see how you teach him.

In short, Eliacin, you have known how to please me;

No doubt you are not an ordinary child.

You see I am a queen and have no heir:

Doff these clothes, abandon this vile office;

I wish you to share in all my riches;

Try this very day if I keep what I promise.

Seated at my table, everywhere at my side,

I intend to treat you as my own son.

*Joash.* As your son.

*Athaliah.* Yes. . . . You are silent!

*Joash.*

What a father

I should leave! and for . . .

*Athaliah.* Well?*Joash.* For what a mother!'

<sup>1</sup> *Joas.* J'adore le Seigneur ; on m'explique sa loi ;  
 Dans son livre divin on m'apprend à la lire :  
 Et déjà de ma main je commence à l'écrire.

*Athalie.* Que vous dit cette loi ?

*Joas.* Que Dieu veut être aimé ;  
 Qu'il venge tôt ou tard son saint nom blasphémé,  
 Qu'il est le défenseur de l'orphelin timide ;  
 Qu'il résiste au superbe et punit l'homicide.

*Athalie.* J'entends. Mais tout ce peuple enfermé dans ce lieu,  
 A quoi s'occupe-t-il ?

*Joas.* Il loue, il bénit Dieu.*Athalie.* Dieu veut-il qu'à toute heure on prie, on le contemple ?*Joas.* Tout profane exercice est banni de son temple.*Athalie.* Quel sont donc vos plaisirs ?

*Joas.* Quelquefois à l'autel  
 Je présente au grand prêtre on l'encens ou le sel ;  
 J'entends chanter de Dieu les grandeurs infinies ;  
 Je vois l'ordre pompeux de ses cérémonies.

*Athalie.* Eh quoi ? vous n'avez point de passe-temps plus doux ?  
 Je plains le triste sort d'un enfant tel que vous.  
 Venez dans mon palais, vous y verrez ma gloire.

*Joas.* Moi ! des bienfaits de Dieu je perdrais la mémoire !*Athalie.* Non ! je ne vous veux pas contraindre à l'oublier.*Joas.* Vous ne le priez point.*Athalie.* Vous pourrez le prier.*Joas.* Je verrais cependant en invoquer un autre.

*Athalie.* J'ai mon dieu que je sers, vous servirez le vôtre ;  
 Ce sont deux puissant dieux.

*Joas.* Il faut craindre le mien.

Lui seul est Dieu, madame ; et le vôtre n'est rien.

*Athalie.* Les plaisirs près de moi vous chercheront en foule.*Joas.* Le bonheur des méchants comme un torrent s'écoule.*Athalie.* Ces méchants, qui sont-ils ?*Josabeth.* Eh, madame ! excusez

Un enfant . . . .

*Athalie.* J'aime à voir comme vous l'instruisez.

Enfin, Éliacin, vous avez su me plaire ;  
 Vous n'êtes point sans doute un enfant ordinaire.  
 Vous voyez, je suis reine et n'ai point d'héritier :  
 Laissez là cet habit, quittez ce vil métier ;  
 Je veux vous faire part de toutes mes richesses ;  
 Essayez dès ce jour l'effet de mes promesses.



I do not know in the whole range of French tragedy in verse any dialogue in which the tone is so unconstrained ; though I must admit that, to say the least of it, Joas is not polite.

The closing years of Racine's life were marked by comparatively slight productions, almost the only ones recorded being a few religious poems for the behoof of the community of Saint Cyr, and a memoir which he is said to have written at the instance of Madame de Maintenon, and which produced results ludicrously beyond what might have been expected from it. He had been conversing one day with Madame upon the miseries of the lower orders, and the necessity for a social reform ; and the royal favourite asked him to put his ideas in writing. Racine did so ; and Louis saw the document when he paid his next visit to his wife. The king, now grown old (1698) and obstinate, having on more than one occasion warmly refused to initiate a policy of reform, even on the advice of his wisest councillors, took offence at the poet's words. "Because he can make verses," he cried, "does he imagine that he knows everything? And because he is a great poet does he want to be a minister of state?" The petulant reproach was enough to crush the spirit of Racine, who could not bear that his gratitude should still be due to a monarch who had ceased to value him. His own son<sup>1</sup> informs us that the reproof broke his father's sensitive heart. This appears to be a mistake, for Racine did not die till a year later, and then of an abscess in the liver. More-

A ma table, partout à mes côtés assis,  
Je prétends vous traiter comme mon propre fils.

*Joas.* Comme votre fils ?

*Athalie.* Oui . . . Vous vous taisez ?

*Joas.* Quel père

Je quitterais ! et pour . . .

*Athalie.* Eh bien ?

*Joas* Pour quelle mère !

Racine, *Mémoires sur la vie de J. Racine.*

over, in his apologetic letter to Madame de Maintenon, written after his disgrace, not a word is said about the memoir, but Racine asks merely to be freed from his share in a tax laid upon the newly appointed councillors. What seems more likely is that Racine interceded in favour of the Port-Royalists, whose short history he had published that same year; that Louis XIV. disapproved of his zeal, and told the poet so; that the latter took this to heart, and brooded over it, that his chronic liver disease got worse, and that he died of it. At his death he expressed a desire to be buried at Port-Royal, which caused a courtier to observe that "Racine would not have shown so much daring if he had been alive." But in any case the *Grand Monarque's* frown had a share in his death, and it is a strange illustration of the remarkable personal influence exerted by Louis upon those to whom he had cared to show himself in his best light.

Racine's dramatic works fall naturally under three heads of classification—his comedy, his classical tragedies, and his scriptural tragedies. "We expect from such an age," a critic observes,<sup>1</sup> "as that which Racine adorned, neither the artless narration of the epic nor the enthusiastic outbursts of the ode. If there exists a kind of poetry which, to produce its effect, requires a full and brilliant assemblage of characters; which in a well-constructed theatre so arranges the audience that they may come to be seen as well as to hear; which sets forth in its elaboration, with seductive art, all the weaknesses of the heart, and knows how to excuse them, to ennoble them, ticketing them with heroic names; which, in a word, presents a flattering mirror to a self-adoring society, no doubt this kind of poetry will be cultivated with success and received with rapture." This, in fact, was the art which earned for Racine his success upon the stage; and in order to probe this success let us pass a rapid survey over the pieces which he

<sup>1</sup> Denogot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, ch. 33, p. 405.

has produced, and of which a slight analysis has already been given. After one or two imitations, or at least over-narrow attempts in the style of the ancients, and of Euripides and Corneille in chief, the *Andromaque* exactly hit the mood of Parisian taste. The title and situation of Euripides, in his drama of the same name, are almost all that Racine has borrowed. He strengthens the circumstances of the plot by making them more natural, and heightens the passion by rendering it more concentrated, so that this play, perhaps better than any other, compares favourably with the work of the ancient Greek. *Phèdre* and *Iphigénie* are cast in the same mould, are equally strong in genuine human interest, and exhibit the passions of love and despair, as men and women of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries are now and then wont to experience them ; but, brought into forced comparison with the lofty work of their originals, they do not show as favourably as is the case with the *Andromaque*. Racine was more than justified in trying to adopt at least the main situations and outlines of some of the masterpieces of Greek tragedy, and in making of these adaptations a present to his country. And in doing this he was never content for a moment with the mere imitation of his models, but set himself conscientiously to re-create and—hardest task of all—to be original even when treading in the footsteps of others. But we are inclined to doubt his judgment in selecting the same subjects which Corneille had already treated, and that so recently and so well. In *Bérénice* and *Mithridate* Racine placed himself in direct contrast with his rival, and if his object were to assert his supremacy by boldly challenging comparison, the result was not altogether as happy as he may have hoped that it would be. In the first-mentioned tragedy, however, Racine shows perhaps most favourably as compared with his rival ; but it must be borne in mind that the younger poet was at that time in his prime, whereas Corneille was an old man ; and the subject

itself, dealing with a deep and comparatively uneventful passion of love, was more suited to the delicate talent of the younger man. It was impossible that a comparison should not have been instituted between the two great tragic authors, even during their lives ; and it was certain that the balance of their merits would be continually struck and readjusted by posterity. English literature hardly affords the basis of a similar parallel ; at all events not between two authors of the first rank. Perhaps the nearest approach to one is that which has often been drawn between Dryden and Pope. Dryden's roughness, energy, variety, is contrasted with Pope's polished nicety and regularity ; Corneille stands in much the same relation to Racine. Pope vied with and imitated Dryden, taking precisely the same subjects<sup>1</sup> on which to exercise his genius ; and this, as we have seen, is what Racine did with respect to Corneille.<sup>2</sup>

Racine was, above all, the painter of love, and to the delineation of that passion he sacrifices nearly everything, —except, of course, his two sacred tragedies. He does not

<sup>1</sup> *St. Cecilia's day.*

<sup>2</sup> M. Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 202, carries the comparison between Corneille and Racine to some degree of minuteness. "All is contrast between these two men : their physiognomy alone would suffice to indicate the difference of their genius ; the majesty which shines on the forehead and lips of Corneille is somewhat rude and rustic, like that of the gods of ancient Rome ; the beauty of Racine is the most elegant and regular, but perhaps the least accentuated amongst the physiognomies of the great men of that time, almost all of them fine. The life of the two men differed no less." All these comparisons of the two great dramatists may best be met by the following epigram of Voltaire :—

" De Beausse et moi, criaillours effrontés,  
 Dans un souper clabaudions à merveille,  
 Et tour à tour épluchions les beautés  
 Et les défauts de Racine et Corneille.  
 A piailler serions encor, je croi,  
 Si n'eussions vu sur la double colline,  
 Le grand Corneille et le tendre Racine,  
 Qui se moquaient et de Beausse et de moi."



try to be historically true, nor endeavour to sketch men in general, but a man or a woman in particular, chiefly given up to one passion. He works that passion out to its most logical deductions, but does not bring in the foreground its excesses or its deformities. His personages are nearly always more consistent than they would be in real life, and use a grandiloquent, noble, and elegant language, often totally unsuited to the character which they are intended to represent. His confidants and servants talk in the same way as their masters, and his Romans, Greeks, and Turks all speak the same language. He adheres to the unity of time and place; hence the continual dialogues between the hero or heroine and his or her servant, and the lengthy and often wearisome descriptions which take the place of action. But, this once admitted, his abstract delineations of passion become masterly, and his personages, though cold and correct, and only representing the courtiers of Louis XIV., move in their limited sphere so grandly that we cannot help being moved by them. The upwelling of the emotions, raised by a tragedy of Racine, may be different from the violent storm of feelings that sweep over us when we look at one of Shakspeare's plays; there may be a good deal of reflection mixed up with it, but it is there, it exists, it carries us away, and this stamps Racine as one of the master-minds of his age. As he was *par excellence* the painter of love, it follows that his heroines occupy the first place on his dramatic canvas. Hermione, Roxane, Bérénice, Eryphile, Phedra, stand out, and they all love more or less passionately; whilst the feeble heroes Bajazet, Hippolytus, Xipharès, Antiochus, are mere puppets, who allow themselves languidly to be worshipped, but hardly ever show that they really and ardently love. The confidants and the other secondary characters of Racine's plays are lay figures, only fit to appear under a portico, and to listen to the explanations of or to give a cue to the principal characters

These tragedies, therefore, are a faithful reproduction of the court of the *Grand Monarque*, who majestically allowed himself to be idolised, and for whose love almost all the ladies of the court were in rivalry. The inferior personages of these plays represent, indeed, the courtiers of Louis XIV., gilded nonentities when the monarch was present, and whose only duty seemed to be to enhance the splendour of the king. Thus, in order to understand Racine well, we must understand the age and court of Louis.

Of Racine as a man, let it be sufficient to say that his faults were those of his age, his virtues and talents his own. "The tender Racine," as he is generally called, was, up to the age of thirty-nine, over sensitive; he wholly gave himself up to his impressions for the time being; and whether in love or writing a tragedy, his entire soul was in the pursuit, so that a check in either one or other produced a reaction which made him very bitter, and even pugnacious, as the prefaces of nearly all his classical tragedies and his epigrams, as well as his *Plaideurs*, testify. After his marriage he tried to unite the Christian with the courtier, and is said to have succeeded in both.

### § 3. MINOR POETS.

By Corneille first, and by Molière and Racine in quick succession, French tragedy and comedy had been almost simultaneously created and brought to perfection. There remained, as a complementary dramatic achievement of the age of the *Grand Monarque*, the creation of the opera. For a society which found its most natural location and surroundings in the court and in the drawing-room, for which the stage itself was a representative court and drawing-

room, and which was never better pleased than when it could witness such brilliant displays as Corneille provided for it in *Andromède*—a *tragédie à machines*, the *Golden Fleece* and *Psyché*, or Molière in his *Mariage forcé* or the *Princesse d'Elide*, the opera pure and simple was nothing short of a necessity. This opera it received at the hands of Quinault,<sup>1</sup> who, assisted by the musical talent of Lulli, contributed as much as any of his literary contemporaries to the splendour and magnificence of the court festivals. The fame of Quinault has undergone many strange vicissitudes; and whilst Boileau has lashed him in his satires,<sup>2</sup> and could never tolerate his works half as patiently as he tolerated the man himself, Voltaire<sup>3</sup> has since attempted to raise him to the first rank of dramatists. No doubt his real worth lies somewhere between these two extreme estimates; but his best title to consideration is found in the fact that he gave to his generation precisely what it wanted, and that his *Astarte* and other plays continued in favour with the public even after the production of *Andromaque*. Whilst, however, his earlier dramatic efforts, with the exception of a passable comedy, *La Mère Coquette*, are now rarely read, the best of his operas, *Armide* and *Atys* in particular, still boast of numerous admirers. The force of Quinault lies, it must be confessed, in his easy versification and musical ear: he would have made an excellent librettist in the nineteenth century—and perhaps we could not hit upon a better measure of his talent. In connection with his friend Lulli, a Florentine attracted to Versailles by the munificence of the king, he founded the *Académie royale de Musique*, in the year 1672. The charter granted to it by

<sup>1</sup> 1635-1688.

<sup>2</sup> "Ces discours sur l'amour seul roulans . . .

Et tous ces lieux communs de morale lubrique

Que Lulli réchauffa du son de sa musique."—*Sat.* x. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Voltaire was no great admirer of Boileau, whom in one place he stigmatises as "Zoïle de Quinault et flatteur de Louis."

Louis authorises "noblemen and ladies of noble birth to sing at the representations of the said academy without loss of rank."

A minor poet of the same age, who is also blamed by Boileau,<sup>1</sup> was Brébeuf,<sup>2</sup> the translator of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Brébeuf's speciality in translation was that he chose, from deliberate purpose, to give back idea by idea, rather than word by word; thus his rendering is what we should call very free, but it is undoubtedly elegant, and as a rule judicious. His fault was that he made himself too literal in the interpretation of ideas; for, after all, the great art of translation seems to be to avoid the crude reproduction of unfamiliar or hyperbolic ideas, whilst retaining as far as possible the actual phrases of the original. An example of Brébeuf's best manner may be found in the following version. Lucan wrote: "The Phœnicians were the first—if we may believe tradition—who ventured to represent by rude characters the words (which they wished) to endure."<sup>3</sup>

Brébeuf expands as follows:—

"From him comes to us that ingenious art  
To paint words and to speak to the eyes,  
And by the different traits of drawn figures  
To give colour and body to thoughts."<sup>4</sup>

His boldest manner is exemplified by a couplet which Boileau

<sup>1</sup> "Mais n'allez point aussi, sur les pas de Brébeuf,  
Même en une Pharsale, entasser sur les rives  
'De morts et de mourants cent montagnes plaintives'  
Prenez mieux votre ton."—*Art Poétique*, chant i.

<sup>2</sup> 1618-1661.

<sup>3</sup> "Phœnices primi, famæ si creditur, ausi  
Mansuram rudibus vocem signare figuris."

*Pharsalia*, bk. iii. v. 220.

<sup>4</sup> "C'est de lui que nous vient cet art ingénieux  
De peindre la parole et de parler aux yeux,  
Et par les traits divers de figures tracées  
Donner de la couleur et du corps aux pensées."



naturally laid hold of for the purpose of turning him into ridicule. Lucan has : "He sees rivers accelerated with blood, and corpses in heaps, as high as lofty hills."<sup>1</sup> Which Brébeuf exaggerates thus :—

"A hundred plaintive mountains of dead and dying,  
A hundred fugitive waves of an impetuous blood."<sup>2</sup>

This is hyperbole with a vengeance.

<sup>1</sup> "Cernit propulsa cruore  
Flumina, et excelsos cumulis æquantia colles  
Corpora." *Pharsalia*, bk. i. v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> De morts et de mourants cent montagnes plaintives,  
D'un sang impétueux cent vagues fugitives."

Corneille himself had written :

"Ces fleuves teints de sang et rendus plus rapides  
Par les débordements de tant de parricides . . .  
Ces montagnes de morts."

See Gérusez, *Histoire de la littérature française*, vol. ii. p. 230.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. BOSSUET AND THE PULPIT ORATORS.

THERE are some half-a-dozen men of the age of Louis XIV. who, considered by themselves, might seem to be the natural centre of the literary spirit of the epoch, to neglect whom were to leave all the rest in darkness, and to consider whom in an exhaustive manner were to discharge more than half the duty of the historian. If Bossuet is not one of these, he is at all events one of the intellectual giants of his day, one of the pivots on which the intellectual history of France must ever turn, and, from the point of view where the domains of literature and religion are conterminous, undoubtedly the most conspicuous landmark which the eye encounters. As a pulpit orator he is supreme amongst Frenchmen; as a philosopher and a man of literary judgment he occupies high rank; whilst his personal influence was probably superior to that of any of his contemporaries. Of his effect upon the character and conduct of the king a perspicuous critic<sup>1</sup> has remarked that Bossuet was "perhaps of all the writers of the seventeenth century the one who can least be separated from Louis XIV. There was a real natural affinity between them; both were of the race of rulers. They advance straight onwards, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and refuse to recognise that which might disconcert them. What the king gave was but little, compared with what Bossuet was worth and with what he gave. For such a man what was a bishopric,

<sup>1</sup> Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-septième siècle*. — Bossuet. I am greatly indebted to this learned critic for several parts of this chapter.

and the sterile honour of instructing the Dauphin? Instinctively we imagine for him one of those brilliant positions which bring to light all the faculties of a man. He would probably have secured it if he had not been born in that parliamentary *bourgeoisie* which the king detested, and which had produced Broussel. Bossuet was none the less the sonorous herald of absolute monarchy and of state-religion."

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet<sup>1</sup> was the son of a parliamentary advocate at Dijon, where he was born just four years after the birth of Pascal. After receiving a rudimentary education at the school of the Jesuits in his native town, he was sent to the college de Navarre, in Paris, at the age of fifteen, for the purpose of pursuing his studies. His reputation as an orator was established before he had reached his nineteenth year. An anecdote is related of him, upon excellent authority,<sup>2</sup> according to which he was introduced, when seventeen years old, to one of the *réunions* of Madame de Rambouillet, in the celebrated *salon bleu*, whither his fame had preceded him, and had been received with no little scepticism. One of the company gave out a subject; he was allowed a few minutes to collect himself; and after a short silence he delivered a discourse which more than justified the good things which had been said of him. Voiture, who was present, declared that he had never heard any one "preach so early, or so late." Another of the audience was probably Cospeau, Bishop of Lisieux, who subsequently advised the young student to abstain from public displays of his talent, and especially "not to make the preaching of the gospel a profane amusement." From that day Bossuet studied, instead of lending himself out as an amateur preacher. At the age of twenty it was necessary for him to sustain a thesis for his

<sup>1</sup> 1627-1704.

<sup>2</sup> Tallemant des Réaux. *Historiettes*, xcix.; and Lédieu, *Mémoire touchant Messire J. B. Bossuet, évêque de Meaux*, ed. Guettée, 1855.

bachelor's degree ; three years later, when soliciting his license to preach, he argued before the grand chamber of the Parliament of Paris the validity of his degree of doctor of theology, and in the same year, he was chosen by his fellow-students to pronounce the usual complimentary harangue.<sup>1</sup> By this time he preached regularly in the chapel of the College de Navarre, having been ordained sub-deacon in 1648. He was made a doctor of divinity in 1652, and was appointed to a benefice at Metz, where he became successively arch-deacon and dean. Here, in 1655, he published his first pamphlet, a *Refutation of the Catechism* of the Protestant minister, Paul Ferri. From the year 1657 he preached constantly before the king and the court ; he was engaged as tutor to the Grand Dauphin,<sup>2</sup> the son of Louis XIV., and was consecrated bishop of Condom, from whence he was presently translated to Meaux.<sup>3</sup>

The *Treatise of the Knowledge of God*, the *Discourse or Universal History*, and the *Politics*, were written with a special view to the author's distinguished pupil ; but the latter seems to have been far too distinguished to appreciate — probably even to read them. Bossuet's instructions do not indeed appear to have been attended by great success, and it is likely enough that his lessons aimed over the head of the learner. Moreover, Bossuet had little of the firmness which was requisite for so difficult a task ; and if he had been as firm as he was ardent and accomplished, he would have been equal to, and would probably have discharged far more important duties. His

<sup>1</sup> See E. Gaudier, *Bossuet orateur*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1661-1711.

<sup>3</sup> His principal writings, in addition to his *Sermons* and *Correspondence* are a *Treatise of the Knowledge of God and of oneself* (1661), an *Exposition of the Catholic faith* (1671), a *Discourse on Universal History* (1681), *Meditations on the Gospel* (1682), *Lefty thoughts on the Mysteries* (1682), a *History of the differences of the Protestant Churches* (1690), *Maxims on Comedy* (1694), and *Poems drawn from Holy scripture*, the latter a posthumous work, published in 1709.



complaisance, his tenderness for the weaknesses and crimes of the great, his desire to please, or his fear to give offence, were the weak points in a lofty and brilliant character. At court he was often made a mediator in difficult and delicate entanglements, and even permitted himself now and then to fall into somewhat compromising situations. He might more than once have prevented much evil, or saved the king from embarrassment or reproach, if he had had the moral courage to speak to him, as perhaps he might have spoken with impunity. In fact, the jest which a certain courtier made at the bishop's expense was at once well deserved and appropriate. Bossuet had been deputed to endeavour to effect an arrangement in a certain matter with M. de Tréville; and when he reported the result of his interview, he said, "He is a man all in one piece; he has no joints." Whereupon the other, being told what the bishop had said of him, rejoined, "as for him he has no bones."<sup>1</sup>

Bossuet, as may be divined from the nature of his education and from the mere titles of his works, was a strict and unyielding Roman Catholic; and in this respect a still more unfortunate slur rests upon his character. His subservience to the king had become so aggravated in the year 1682 that he made himself one of the principal accomplices in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and he cannot be acquitted of at least an indirect influence in bringing about the shameful and sanguinary *dragonnades*.<sup>2</sup> Writing to Nicole, after the

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, vol. v. p. 503.

<sup>2</sup> On this phase of Bossuet's character see Réaume *Histoire de J. B. Bossuet*. In the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, is an article "Bossuet," written by the Abbé Receveur, *docteur* of the faculty of theology of Paris, in which the following passage occurs:—"The revocation of the Edict of Nantes had changed in France the conditions of Protestantism. Bossuet, like all the clergy, and all the bodies of the State, applauded this measure. . . . We may at least observe that we ought not to judge this measure according to the ideas of tolerance so universal at present: that the turbulent spirit of the Calvinists, their always increasing pretensions, the civil wars which they had so often raised, and their daily disputes with the Roman Catholics,

Protestants had been partly driven out of France, and partly massacred, he exclaims: "Sad condition of France, whilst she was compelled to nourish and tolerate, under the name of Reformed, so many disguised Socinians, so many persons without religion, who, by the confession of their own ministers, only thought of the means of overturning Christianity. I have no desire to argue upon what has taken place as a finished politician. I adore with you the designs of God, who desired to reveal by the diversion of our Protestants that mystery of iniquity, and to purge France of those monsters." The spectacle here presented is sufficiently sad, and it speaks for itself. Bossuet attacked also Fénelon, about the doctrine of Quietism, in which it is not our purpose to enter, but in which he showed, to say the least, extreme vivacity, and made use of some very strong expressions, indicating an animosity,

may have caused it to be considered as necessary for the tranquillity of the State; and that, after all, it ill became them to complain that the public exercise of their worship was forbidden to them when they gave themselves the example of a much more rigorous intolerance, and pronounced severe penalties against Catholics and dissidents of all kinds, wherever they were masters. Moreover, it is certain that Bossuet personally always showed himself much opposed to measures of compulsion and violence towards the Protestants. We see, by his correspondence with M. de Basville, Intendant of Languedoc, and with several bishops of this province, that he disapproved of the rigours and vexations which they employed to compel them to be present at mass. He never employed in his diocese anything but gentle and instructive measures; he even used his credit and influence to prevent the rigorous measures of the civil authority, and to protect even sometimes seditious Protestants against the just severity of the laws. This system of moderation was not without success. A great number of Protestants became converted." To speak "of the turbulent spirit and the increasing pretensions of the Calvinists" at the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes is a palpable mis-statement, and so is the possible necessity for "the tranquillity of the State." To say of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes that by this measure only "the public exercise of their worship was forbidden to them" is something more than a clerical error. Besides, granted that the Protestants gave "the example of religious intolerance," two wrongs do not make one right; whilst the expressions "seditious Protestants," and "just severity of the laws," show the tendency of the writer of the article. Nothing is said about the *dragonnades*, for which see Sir John Reresby's *Travels and Memoirs*.

flavoured with the *odium theologicum*, in every way unworthy of him.

As a politician Bossuet no doubt honestly believed in the system which Louis XIV. and his ministers—following in the groove which Richelieu and Mazarin had marked out for them—assiduously built up and maintained: the system of government through the absolutism of the monarch, the despotism of the king supported and sanctioned by the authority of the Church. Authority was the corner-stone of this edifice; liberty was not the privilege of the subject, but a favour granted to him by authority. The example set by England, twice notably in the course of the seventeenth century—on the death of Charles I. and the expulsion of James II.—was utterly neglected by France: and as the long reign of the *Grand Monarque* drew towards its close, all the weaknesses consequent upon the abuse of absolute power became exaggerated, whilst the causes which had produced the first glories of Louis's reign ceased to operate. A few wise men saw the danger; Fénelon openly rebelled against it; Saint-Simon, Vauban, and one or two more did their best to counteract it. But Louis was obstinate and selfish to the last degree; he neither saw nor cared to see the rocks a-head; and those who ought to have been the first to warn him were the most eager to conceal the truth from him. Of these prophets of good, Bossuet was the one upon whom the greatest responsibility rested; and the excuse for his silence is to be found only in the fact that he really believed in absolute power, as ordained and imposed by God himself. In the system of statecraft to which his perverted judgment gave its assent, judge by a brief extract from his sermon *On Evangelical preaching* as to the place which he assigned to God's anointed. He thus apostrophises:

“O God! give efficacy to thy word. O God, thou seest in what place I am preaching, and thou knowest, O God, what I

ought to say here. Give me words of wisdom ; give me effectual and powerful words ; give me prudence ; give me force ; give me circumspection ; give me simplicity. Thou knowest, O living God, that the ardent zeal which animates me for the service of my king makes me happy when I announce thy Gospel to this great monarch, veritably great, and worthy, by the greatness of his soul, to hear nothing but great things ; worthy, by the love which he bears to the truth, never to be deceived. Sire, it is God who ought to speak from this pulpit ; may He then, by his Holy Spirit—for it is He alone who can do so great a work, cause that the man may not appear therein ! ”

When this was the language of the pulpit, imagine what must have been the language of the ante-chamber and the throne-room.

The *Discourse on Universal History* is one of the few contributions which the seventeenth century has made to historical literature in France ; and, whatever be thought of the scheme on which it is framed, the credit must still remain to Bossuet of having in some degree foreshadowed the establishment of a philosophy of history. The philosophy is, indeed, by no means a wide one, its central idea being simply and solely the subordination of all historical facts to the one fact of Christianity. With Bossuet the foundation of the Christian religion is the alpha and omega of profane history ; or rather, with him all history becomes sacred from its dependence upon this fact. Kings rule in order that God may be obeyed ; subjects tremble before their Kings because God has pronounced His laws. It was Balzac who said that “men are the actors, God the poet,” but it remained for Bossuet to enlarge upon the text. He saw the Deity omnipresent and omnipotent, in every age of the world’s history ; he saw the conquerors of every age, adding each one his contribution to the glory of the God of Christians. The pith of his discourse and of his system is contained in the follow-



ing passage, which we may quote both in English and in the original, as an example at once of Bossuet's philosophy and of his style.

"From the highest Heaven God holds the reins of every kingdom; He has all hearts in His hand; at one moment He restrains the passions, at another He unbridles them, and thus sets in motion the whole human race. Would He create conquerors? He makes fear to march before them, and breathes invincible boldness into them and their soldiers. Would He create legislators? He sends them his spirit of wisdom and foresight; He makes them anticipate the evils which threaten States, and lay the foundations of public tranquillity. He knows the wisdom of man, ever falling short in some particular; He enlightens it; He extends his view, and then He abandons it to its ignorance; He blinds it, confounds it by its own means; it encloses, it embarrasses itself in its own subtilities, and its precautions are a snare to it. God thus effects His formidable judgments by the ever infallible rules of His justice. It is He who prepares effects in the most distant causes, and who strikes those mighty blows whose results reach so far. When he wishes to let loose these results and overturn empires, all is weak and inconstant in counsel. Egypt, in other respects so wise, moves intoxicated, dazed and tottering, because the Lord has breathed the spirit of giddiness in its counsels; it no longer knows what it does, it is lost. But let not men deceive themselves: when God pleases he restores the disturbed sense, and he who has triumphed over the blindness of others falls himself into the thickest darkness, often with no other reason to overturn his sense than his long prosperity.

"It is thus that God rules over all nations. Let us speak no more of chance or fortune, or speak of them only as of a name whereby we cover our ignorance. That which is chance in relation to our uncertain counsels is a concerted design in a higher counsel, to wit, in that eternal counsel which includes all causes and all effects in one and the same order. Thus all combines to the same end; and it is because we cannot hear all, that we find chance or irregularity in special occurrences.

"In this way is verified what the Apostle says, that God 'is

the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.'<sup>1</sup> Blessed, in that His rest is undisturbed, who sees everything change without himself changing, and who causes all changes by an immutable counsel; who gives and who takes away power; who transfers it from one man to another, from one house to another, from one people to another, to show that they all hold it simply as a loan, and that He is the only one in whom it naturally resides.

"This is why all who govern feel themselves subjected to a greater force. They do more or less than they think, and their counsels never fail to have unforeseen results. They are neither the controllers of the dispositions which past ages have induced in the affairs (of their kingdoms), nor can they foresee the course which the future will take, much less can they force it. He alone holds everything in His hand, who knows the name of that which is and that which is not yet, who holds sway over all ages, and who anticipates all counsels."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul's *Second Epistle to Timothy*, vi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> "Dieu tient du plus haut des cieux les rênes de tous les royaumes; il a tous les cœurs en sa main: tantôt il retient les passions, tantôt il leur lâche la bride, et par là il remue tout le genre humain. Veut-il faire des conquérants? il fait marcher l'épouvante devant eux, et il inspire à eux et à leurs soldats une hardiesse invincible. Veut-il faire des législateurs? il leur envoie son esprit de sagesse et de prévoyance; il leur fait prévenir les maux qui menacent les États, et poser les fondements de la tranquillité publique. Il connaît la sagesse humaine, toujours courte par quelque endroit; il l'éclaire, il étend ses vues, et puis il l'abandonne à ses ignorances: il l'aveugle, il la confond par elle-même: elle s'enveloppe, elle s'embarrasse dans ses propres subtilités, et ses précautions lui sont un piège. Dieu exerce par ce moyen ses redoutables jugements, selon les règles de sa justice toujours infallible. C'est lui qui prépare les effets dans les causes les plus éloignées, et qui frappe ces grands coups dont le contre-coup porte si loin. Quand il veut lâcher le dernier et renverser les empires, tout est faible et irrégulier dans les conseils. L'Égypte, autrefois si sage, marche enivrée, étourdie et chancelante, parce que le Seigneur a répandu l'esprit de vertige dans ses conseils; elle ne sait plus ce qu'elle fait, elle est perdue. Mais que les hommes ne s'y trompent pas: Dieu redresse quand il lui plaît le sens égaré; et celui qui insultait à l'aveuglement des autres tombe lui-même dans des ténèbres plus épaisses, sans qu'il faille souvent autre chose, pour lui renverser le sens, que ses longues prospérités.

"C'est ainsi que Dieu règne sur tous les peuples. Ne parlons plus de hasard ni de fortune, ou parlons en seulement comme d'un nom dont nous couvrons notre ignorance. Ce qui est hasard à l'égard de nos conseils incertains est au dessein concerté dans un conseil plus haut, c'est-à-dire dans ce conseil éternel

But it is by his sermons, and especially by his funeral sermons, inheriting as they do the spirit and grace of the ancient French panegyrists, that Bossuet will always be chiefly known; and, as is the case with all orators of comparatively recent date, the tradition of his spoken eloquence doubles the fame which he derives from his written works. His contemporary La Bruyère called him a Father of the Church; and he is in fact a legitimate successor of the patristic writers and preachers of the earlier Christian centuries, who swayed their hearers by their tongues as much as, or more than, they persuade later generations by their pens. Eliminating the political element from Bossuet's sermons, and considering them merely from a literary point of view—in so far as sermons can be considered from such a point—that which remains is marked by much common sense, over and above its eloquence and unction. Fénelon says of him that he had read little of the mystics, and scarcely knew St. François de Sales. However this may have been, it is certain that Bossuet had studied Descartes, and was familiar with Pascal and his fellow Jansenists. The breadth of his views made him distasteful to Rome, which could not but look with jealousy on his persistent elevation of Louis as the head

qui renferme toutes les causes et tous les effets dans un même ordre. De cette sorte, tout concourt à la même fin; et c'est faute d'entendre le tout, que nous trouvons du hasard ou de l'irrégularité dans les rencontres particulières.

"Par là se vérifie ce que dit l'Apôtre, que 'Dieu est heureux, et le seul puissant, roi des rois, et seigneur des seigneurs.' Heureux, dont le repos est inaltérable, qui voit tout changer sans changer lui-même, et qui fait tous les changements par un conseil immuable: qui donne et qui ôte la puissance; qui la transporte d'un homme à un autre, d'une maison à une autre, d'un peuple à un autre, pour montrer qu'ils ne l'ont tous que par emprunt, et qu'il est le seul en qui elle réside naturellement.

"C'est pourquoi tous ceux qui gouvernent se sentent assujettis à une force majeure. Ils font plus ou moins qu'ils ne pensent, et leurs conseils n'ont jamais manqué d'avoir des effets imprévus. Ni ils ne sont maîtres des dispositions que les siècles passés ont mises dans les affaires, ni ils ne peuvent prévoir le cours que prendra l'avenir, loin qu'ils le puissent forcer. Celui-là seul tient tout en sa main, qui sait le nom de ce qui est et de ce qui n'est pas encore, qui préside à tous les temps et prévient tous les conseils."

of the Gallican Church, to the virtual derogation of the Papal assumptions; and in the judgment which the Sacred College pronounced in the dispute between Bossuet and Fénelon, the first was said to be in the right, but is by no means allowed to bear away the palm without a wholesome castigation; "The bishop of Cambrai (Fénelon) has erred through excess of the love of God; the bishop of Meaux (Bossuet) has sinned through lack of the love of his neighbour." The fact is that Bossuet, influential as he was with his King and his countrymen, powerful as has been thought to be his championship of divine right and his argument against the Protestant churches,<sup>1</sup> falls short of greatness in almost every single respect, except that of his ardent and magnificent eloquence, wherein he undoubtedly lays claim to be considered the pride and model of Christian rhetoric. The French language, and French prose in particular, had by this time become, beyond comparison, the most polished, forcible, and efficient instrument of human speech, the most suited for logical and persuasive efforts, the most capable of reaping brilliant rhetorical triumphs, but, perhaps also, too florid and ornate to suit the more natural taste of the present day.

A disciple at once of Bossuet and of Balzac—yet a man of whom Fénelon could say, when he heard of his death, that he had lost his master—was Esprit Fléchier,<sup>2</sup> born at Pernes, near Carpentras, who began his career as a professor of rhetoric at Narbonne. At the age of thirty, after spending three years at Paris, he became tutor to the son of M. Lefèvre de Caumartin, *maître des requêtes*, whom, in the year 1635, he accompanied into Auvergne, on the occasion of the *Grands Jours* of that district. One result of that journey was that Fléchier wrote his *Memorials of the Grands Jours d'Auvergne*, a most in-

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Burnet maintains that Bossuet had no need to give himself so much trouble to prove the variations of the Reformed Churches, for the Protestants never pretended to be infallible or inspired.

<sup>2</sup> 1632-1719



teresting sketch of the social condition of the French provinces at that time, and of the administration of the law under the comparatively feeble government of Mazarin. In this record,\* familiar and full of spirit, which scarcely foretold the genius of the sacred orator whose funeral orations were hereafter to be deemed worthy of a place beside those of Bossuet, one is enabled to form an idea of "the barbarism in which certain districts of France were still plunged, in the midst of that brilliant civilisation of the seventeenth century," and how "many of the great lords, who in the assemblies of Paris appeared so gallant and amiable, lived amongst their subjects," so that "one might imagine oneself in the full tide of feudalism."<sup>1</sup> In Paris Fléchier was an *habitué* of the hôtel de Rambouillet in its later days, being welcomed on account of his eloquence and wit. He himself describes the "cradle of polished society" as a place "frequented by many persons of quality and merit, who composed a select court, numerous without confusion, modest without constraint, learned without pride, polished without affectation;" and if his estimate was, as we know that it was, too appreciative in at least one respect, still it was just on the whole, and the fact of his being an acceptable guest of Madame de Rambouillet and her daughter is in itself a witness to his literary worth. In 1672 he pronounced the funeral oration upon the death of Madame de Montausier, being by this time recognised as one of the loftiest and most ornate of pulpit orators, in that higher and dignified style which Bossuet had done so much to introduce. Four years later he eclipsed himself in an oration on Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, killed at the battle of Salzbach in 1675, son of the Marshal de Bouillon, and better known as Turenne, who had changed his religion and become a Roman Catholic, converted, it was said, by Bossuet's *Exposition of Faith*. In Louis XIV.'s time people seem to have been easily converted.

<sup>1</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 68.

In 1673 Fléchier succeeded Godeau in his *fautueil* at the Academy ; and although he was now more a preacher than a writer, and more an ecclesiastic than a literary man, he never lost his love for literature. In his *Grands Jours* he had declared himself in favour of the stage, "provided that it offends neither against propriety nor against the order of civil society," and he was never sufficiently austere to withdraw the declaration. He was made bishop of Lavaur, and subsequently of Nîmes, and Louis XIV. appointed him almoner to the Dauphine, for whom he wrote his *Life of Theodosius*. In his late years Fléchier had greatly toned down the efflorescence of his youth, and had lost all his liberality of mind. He followed the example of Bossuet in applauding the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the cruel *dragonnades* which resulted from them : as indeed did nearly all the great men and accomplished women of the day—La Bruyère, La Fontaine, Madame de Sévigné, and the rest. Fléchier went farther still : he maintained that many converts had not genuinely returned to the orthodox faith, and joined in the clamour raised by the most intolerant men of the age, who, at the close of the century, demanded that the *mal convertis* should be subjected to "a wholesome restraint." Bossuet had the moral courage to protest, in opposition to the majority of the bishops, against the proposal to force all professed converts to attend the celebration of the mass ; and the king taking the same view as Bossuet, extreme measures were avoided.

We should wrong Fléchier if we refrained from giving a short specimen of his oration on the death of Turenne. It is considered his best, and full of antitheses, like everything he has written. Madame de Sévigné says in one of her letters "that she never heard anything so fine."

"If M. de Turenne had but known how to fight and to conquer, if he had not raised himself above the level of human virtues,

if his valour and prudence had not been animated by a spirit of faith and charity, I should place him in the ranks of Scipio and Fabius ; I should leave to vanity the charge of honour and vanity, and should not come into a sacred place to pronounce the eulogy of a profane man. If he had ended his days in blindness and error, it would be in vain for me to praise virtues which God had not crowned, I should but shed useless tears upon his tomb : and if I spoke of his glory it would be but to deplore his misfortune. But, thanks be to Jesus Christ, I speak of a Christian illuminated by the light of faith, acting upon the principles of a pure religion, and consecrating by a sincere piety all which can flatter the ambition or the pride of men. Thus do the praises which I give to him return to God, who is their source ; and as it is the truth which sanctified him, so also it is the truth which praises him.

“Gentlemen, how complete was his conversion, and how different was he from those who, deserting heresy from interested motives, change their opinion without changing their morals, enter the bosom of the Church only to wound her more nearly by a scandalous life, and ceased to be declared enemies only by becoming rebellious children ! . . . He no sooner embraced sound doctrine than he became its defender : the moment he had girt himself with the arms of light he combated the works of darkness : he trembled as he saw the abyss from whence he had issued, and stretched out his hand to those whom he had left behind. It might be said that he was charged with restoring to the bosom of the church all whom schism had separated from it ; he invited them by his counsels, he allured them by his services, he urged them by his arguments, he convinced them by his experience, he made them see the reefs on which human reason suffers so many shipwrecks, and showed them behind his feet, according to the expression of Saint Augustine, the bridge of the mercy of God, across which he had himself so recently passed.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Si M. de Turenne n'avait su que combattre et vaincre, s'il ne s'était élevé au-dessus des vertus humaines, si sa valeur et sa prudence n'avaient été animées d'un esprit de foi et de charité, je le mettrais au rang des Scipions et des Fabius ; je laisserais à la vanité le soin d'honorer la vanité, et je ne viendrais pas dans un lieu saint faire l'éloge d'un homme profane. S'il avait fini ses jours dans

This is fine. It is, however, curious that Fléchier in another part of this funeral oration of the converted hero mentions without scruple that Turenne provided the necessary funds to assist "those who abandon all to follow Jesus Christ who calls them," as well as "to gain over those whom cupidity and interest still retain in their errors;" though the bishop does not say anything of the tender mercies of the booted apostles whom Louis XIV. employed to convert his people, nor of Turenne's conduct in the Palatinate.

Fléchier, as we have said, was the disciple of Balzac as well as of Bossuet, perhaps more of Balzac than of Bossuet. His style, sparkling and ornate even to the point of vain-glorious display, fell short of Bossuet's dignity and impressive earnestness; much more so than another pulpit-orator of the same day, Bourdaloue, who has been aptly described as "one of the finest and best of Bossuet's works."<sup>1</sup> Bourdaloue<sup>2</sup> was in fact something more than a creation of the master-

l'aveuglement et dans l'erreur, je louerais en vain des vertus que Dieu n'aurait pas couronnées, je répandrais des larmes inutiles sur son tombeau: et, si je parlais de sa gloire, ce ne serait que pour déplorer son malheur. Mais, grâces à Jésus-Christ, je parle d'un chrétien éclairé des lumières de la foi, agissant par les principes d'une religion pure, et consacrant par une sincère piété tout ce qui peut flatter l'ambition ou l'orgueil des hommes. Ainsi les louanges que je lui donne retournent à Dieu, qui en est la source, et comme c'est la vérité qui l'a sanctifié, c'est aussi la vérité qui le loue.

"Que sa conversion fut entière, messieurs! et qu'il fut différent de ceux qui, sortant de l'hérésie par des vues intéressées, changent de sentiment sans changer de mœurs, n'étaient dans le sein de l'Eglise que pour la blesser de plus près par une vie scandaleuse, et ne cessent d'être ennemis déclarés qu'en devenant enfants rebelles! . . . "A peine a-t-il embrassé la sainte doctrine, qu'il en devient le défenseur; aussitôt qu'il est revêtu des armes de lumière, il combat les œuvres de ténèbres; il regarde en tremblant l'abîme d'où il est sorti et il tend la main à ceux qu'il y a laissés: on dirait qu'il est chargé de ramener dans le sein de l'Eglise tous ceux que le schisme en a séparés: il les invite par ses conseils, il les attire par ses bienfaits, il les presse par ses raisons, il les convainc par ses expériences, il leur fait voir les écueils où la raison humaine fait tant de naufrages, et leur montre derrière lui, selon les termes de saint Augustin, le pont de la miséricorde de Dieu, par où il vient de passer lui-même."

<sup>1</sup> Maury, *Essai sur l'Eloquence de la Chaire*, § 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1632-1704.



preacher of the age ; he vied with him closely both in his success with his hearers and in his estimation by posterity. Born at Bourges, Louis Bourdaloue entered the society of Jesus as a noviciate in his sixteenth year, and his precocity in oratorical skill was as remarkable as that of the young student who had delighted the critics of Madame de Rambouillet's *salon bleu*. One does not expect to learn much concerning the life of a Jesuit, at all events of a Jesuit who serves his order in no more public or worldly manner than by occupying the pulpit ; and of Bourdaloue we know little more than that he raised his voice against the king's irregularities of conduct ;<sup>1</sup> that he went to Languedoc to preach to those who were supposed to be insincere in their conversion from Protestantism, that he administered the last rites of his church to Colbert, and that he further united with Bossuet in condemning the mysticism which, under the name of quietism,<sup>2</sup> became partly fashionable through the writings of Madame de la Mothe-Guyon, which was dallied with by Fénelon, and which even brought Madame de Maintenon for a short time under its influence. Little as it is, almost all that we are told of Bourdaloue redounds vastly to his credit. By his severe morality, his practical and common-sense Christianity, his modest learning and his evangelical preaching, he did much to blunt for a time the point of Pascal's weapons against the Society of Jesus, and reflected as great honour upon the order to which he belonged as any other Jesuit that could be named.

Bourdaloue was one of those who looked with jealousy upon the freedom of the stage, and in particular he raised his voice in the pulpit against Molière's *Tartuffe* : the hypocrite was clever enough to enlist upon his side ecclesiastics of the

<sup>1</sup> Not entirely without success. Moreover, Louise de la Vallière's retirement to a Carmelite convent was probably due, as much as to anything else, to Bourdaloue's continued and earnest exhortations from the pulpit.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, bk. v. ch. 5, p. 356.

greatest piety and sincerity, although the famous dramatist had taken special care to except such men from the scope of his satire.<sup>1</sup> From his own point of view, Bourdaloue's argument was not unreasonable. In his sermon for the seventh Sunday after Easter, "On Hypocrisy," preached in 1669, he says that "as true and false piety have a great number of actions in common, and as the external appearances of both are almost wholly similar, the traits with which false religion is depicted harm the true religion." And such is the case when "dramatists place upon the stage and expose to public mockery an imaginary, or even, if you like, a real hypocrite, and, by portraying him, turn into ridicule the holiest things, the dread of the judgments of God, horror against sin, practices in themselves the most praiseworthy and the most Christian."

Perhaps the great distinction between Bossuet and Bourdaloue, so far as regards their style, is that the former was essentially a declaimer in the pulpit, who chose subjects of grandeur, and was happiest in the displays which he made before the grandest audiences; whilst the latter was the author of sermons rather than of declamations, and manifestly valued a victory over the heart of a humble listener more than over the judgment of a man of taste. Full of sense and rational argument, straightforward, reasoning well on the questions which he broached, and rarely touching on anything for which he had not a satisfactory reason at hand, graphic and shrewd in his illustrations from human nature and conduct; clear, antithetical, and harmonious in style, calm and elegant as a rule, and careful not to give too great liberty to his imagination;—these are the qualities for which Bourdaloue is best

<sup>1</sup> In Act i. scene 6 of *Tartuffe*, Cléante says to Orgon: "There are hypocrites in religion as well as pretenders to courage. . . . I know no character more worthy of esteem than the truly devout, nor anything in the world more noble or beautiful than the holy fervour of sincere piety; and so I know nothing more odious than the whitened sepulchre of a pretended zealot."

esteemed, and which have caused him sometimes to be set in the very highest place amongst the preachers of the seventeenth century. Let us give the opening of his sermons on the Resurrection, preached before the King :—

“ ‘And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.’<sup>1</sup> Sire, these words are very different from those which we see commonly engraved on the tombs of men. However powerful they may have been, to what come these magnificent praises which are bestowed upon them, and which we read upon these superb mausoleums which human vanity erects to them? To this inscription: ‘here lies;’ this great man, this conqueror, this man so renowned in the world, is lying under this stone, and buried in the dust, and all his power and all his might cannot drag him away from it. But it is otherwise with Jesus Christ. Scarcely has He been within the bosom of the earth when He leaves it, on the third day, victorious, and wholly shining with light; so that these pious women who came to look for Him, and who, not finding Him, wish to get tidings of Him, learn nothing else except that He is risen and is no longer there. That is, according to the prediction and expression of Isaiah, why ‘the pomp is brought down to the grave.’<sup>2</sup> Whilst the glory of the great men of the age ends in the tomb, it is in the tomb that the glory of this God-man begins. It is there, it is thus to say in the very centre of weakness, that He makes all his strength to shine forth, and in the very arms of death, that He retakes by his own virtue a very happy and immortal life.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, xxviii. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xiv. 11.

<sup>3</sup> “ ‘L’ange dit aux femmes : Ne craignez point ; vous cherchez Jésus de Nazareth qui a été crucifié : il est ressuscité ; il n’est point ici ; voici le lieu où on l’avait mis.’

“ Sire, ces paroles sont bien différentes de celles nous voyons communément gravées sur les tombeaux des hommes. Quelque puissants qu’ils aient été, à quoi se réduisent ces magnifiques éloges qu’on leur donne, et que nous lisons sur ces superbes mausolées que leur érige la vanité humaine ? A cette inscription : *hic jacet* ; ce grand, ce conquérant, cet homme tant vanté dans

His philosophy is well-nigh limited to the repudiation of all intellectual exercise except that which may be necessary for the defence of the faith. His *Agreement of Reason and Faith* goes farther in the discouragement of independent reason than any of his contemporaries ; and this in spite of the fact that he was naturally endowed with a robust and perspicacious logical faculty. Bretonneau,<sup>1</sup> who was the first editor of his sermons, says of him : " He received from nature a fund of reason which, added to a lively and penetrating imagination, enabled him to discover at once in everything whatever it contained of solidity and truth. That was his genuine character, and it was this direct reasoning power which, together with the illumination of faith, formed his guide in all questions of Christian morality and religious mystery, of which it behoved him to treat. The beauty of his sermons consists not exactly in a few well-introduced passages, wherein the orator exhausts his whole art and fire, but in a body of discourse wherein all is sustained, because all is bound together and well arranged."

It would seem as though the critic were here implying a contrast between Bourdaloue and Bossuet, who, by the by, had in his younger days declined the overtures of the Society of Jesus.

le monde, est ici couché sous cette pierre, et enseveli dans la poussière, sans que tout son pouvoir et toute sa puissance l'en puissent tirer. Mais il en va bien autrement à l'égard de Jésus-Christ. A peine a-t-il été enfermé dans le sein de la terre qu'il en sort des le troisième jour, victorieux et tout brillant de lumière ; en sorte que ces femmes dévotes que le viennent chercher, et qui, ne le trouvant pas, en veulent savoir des nouvelles, n'en apprennent rien autre chose, sinon qu'il est ressuscité et qu'il n'est plus là : Voilà, selon la prédiction et l'expression d'Isaïe, ce qui rend son tombeau glorieux : Au lieu donc que la gloire des grands du siècle se termine au tombeau, c'est dans le tombeau que commence la gloire de ce Dieu-homme. C'est là, c'est, pour ainsi dire, dans le centre même de la faiblesse, qu'il fait éclater toute sa force, et jusqu'entre les bras de la mort, qu'il reprend par sa propre vertu une vie bienheureuse et immortelle."

<sup>1</sup> 1707-1734.



## § 2. PHILOSOPHICAL MORALISTS.

Another religious writer of the age of Bossuet, more distinctly than he a disciple of Descartes, a thinker rather than an orator, a metaphysician rather than a preacher, was Nicolas Malebranche,<sup>1</sup> born at Paris, and a father of the Oratory from an early age to the day of his death. M. Victor Cousin speaks of his "angelic style," and indeed the works of Malebranche are distinguished by an elegance and a charm which amply account for the favour in which they have always been held. The Oratory had shown itself a courageous champion of Descartes and of the Jansenists; and Malebranche was the last and greatest of the thinkers whom it produced. In his contempt for the world, in his utter oblivion of the material in presence of the ideal, he was the Kant of his country and generation. As a philosopher he holds a place midway between Bossuet and Spinoza; with all the unwavering faith of the first, and much of the courageous speculation of the second. His *Research after Truth*, published in 1674,<sup>2</sup> is a candid and laborious disquisition into the causes of human error, in the manner of Descartes, although without the latter's breadth of view or boldness of inference. Malebranche was in fact a Christian philosopher, with more than sufficient knowledge to lead him to scepticism, but also with sufficient faith, simplicity, and submissiveness to enable him to remain a good Catholic to the last. In some respects his metaphysical horizon was no wider than that of Bossuet and Fénelon: he honestly believed that, in communion with a personal Deity, man stood face to face with the very source

<sup>1</sup> 1631-1715.

<sup>2</sup> The first volume was published in this year; the others succeeded it at intervals.

of truth, the centre of every manifestation of intellect. But in his definition of the divine ideal, he used terms to which the less adventurous Bossuet found himself unable to subscribe, and which Arnauld attacked with some asperity.

In the opinion of Malebranche the flesh is the origin, or at all events the medium of all sin ; the soul of man is more nearly allied to God than it is to his own body ; the senses of man do not inform him as to the real nature of phenomenal existences, but only as to their relations with the body. Our body, again, is that which alienates us from God ; original sin was the divorcing of the soul from God and its remarriage with the body. Man had thus become corrupted from the form in which God created him : and whereas his soul ought to stand aloof from the senses, and to sit in judgment upon their evidence, it was more apt to receive their testimony under the title of science. In short, science was the product of the union of spirit and body ; religion was the fruit of the spirit's commerce with God. Here Malebranche parted from his master Descartes, and chose religion as the path whereby his research of truth might attain its end. Descartes had gone on the other tack, not indeed repudiating truth in religion, but assuming that God had in the beginning ordained that man should imbibe truth through his senses, and that the union of body and soul was not adulterous but legitimate.

As a consequence of these initial positions, Malebranche held that the spirit, in its quest of truth, must set aside all testimony derived from the senses alone. To the vice of phenomenal inductions he traced all the errors which the human judgment had incurred. "If men had been specially enlightened," he maintained, "universal approbation would be an argument for it, but it is entirely otherwise." The reason of the individual is therefore brought face to face with God ; from Him alone its inquiries must be made, and by Him alone can clear and distinct ideas be implanted in the

mind. It is for this revelation of truth that we must strive and wait : strive by prayer, and wait in humility and with suspended judgment.

The consequence is evident. The truth of Christianity, to take a crucial test, must not be accepted upon the evidence of tradition and ecclesiastical history, but must be received only after a fresh revelation direct from God to the soul of each. Authority and Catholicity disappear before such a doctrine, and the theory of Malebranche is fatal, in particular, to the orthodox Roman Catholic creed. In fact, whilst Malebranche had the mind of a metaphysician, the method and the processes of a true philosopher, his conclusions were warped by the foregone conclusion that his religion was true, whatever philosophy might teach him ; but if he ended by an inference the reverse of philosophic, his *Research* none the less proves the fervour and refinement of his natural genius.

Amongst the best of Malebranche's remaining works are a volume of *Metaphysical Conversations*, a *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, *Discussions on Metaphysics and Religion*, and a *Treatise on the Love of God*. Judge of his style and of the suggestive manner of his treatment of whatever subject he took in hand, by a short passage on amiability of character, taken from a treatise on the *Duties of Equals*.

“ In order to be loved we must render ourselves lovable. It is an unjust and ridiculous pretension to exact friendship ; and those who are not loved ought to attribute it to none save themselves. If justice is not always done to merit, inasmuch as it is not always recognised, and men commonly judge it amiss, every one is alive to amiable qualities, and they who possess them never lack friends.

“ The merit of others effaces our own ; and when we do them justice it is as though we did ourselves wrong. We cannot extol them without debasing ourselves ; and when we put them beneath us we imagine that we are the greater for it. But when we love any one we do ourselves no wrong. It would

seem, on the contrary, that the soul is expanded by imparting itself to the hearts of others, and that it clothes itself and adorns itself with the glory which surrounds its friends. Thus we always make ourselves loved so long as we render ourselves lovable ; but we do not always make ourselves esteemed, whatever merit we may have.

“What, then, are the qualities which render us lovable ? Nothing is easier than to discover them. It is not the possession of wit, of knowledge, of good looks, a straight and shapely person, birth, riches, or even virtues ; it is not exactly the whole of these, for one may feel an aversion for the man who possesses all these estimable qualities. What then ? It is to appear in such a manner that others conclude they will be happy in our company. . . . They who would be loved, and who have much wit, should impart it to others. Let them lay so much stress on the good things others say in their presence that each shall, in their company, be pleased with himself. Let not him who has knowledge preach like a master of the truths whereof he is convinced ; but let him have the art of insensibly causing the light to shine in the minds of those who listen to him, so that each may find himself enlightened without the shame of having been his disciple. He who is liberal is not amiable if he extols himself, or boasts of his liberalities. In fact, he makes his favours a reproach to him to whom he has shown them, by the confusion wherewith he covers him. But he who has imparted to others his wit and his knowledge, as well as his money and his greatness, without any one perceiving it, and without drawing from it any advantage, necessarily gains all hearts by this virtuous liberality—the only liberality, I am bold to say, which is virtuous and charitable, the only liberality which is generous and sincere. For all other liberality is but a simple effect of self-love, all other is interested, or at least very ill regulated.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Pour se faire aimer, il faut se rendre aimable. C’est une prétention injuste et ridicule que d’exiger de l’amitié ; et ceux qui ne se font point aimer ne s’en doivent prendre qu’à eux-mêmes. Si on ne rend pas toujours justice au mérite, à cause qu’on ne le connoît pas et qu’ordinairement on en juge mal, tout le monde est sensible aux qualités aimables, et ceux qui les possèdent ne manquent jamais d’amis.

“ Le mérite des autres efface le nôtre ; et quand on leur rend justice il



In an age of moralists and moral maxims we have here a La Rochefoucauld with an intimate knowledge of human nature at its best ; without cynicism, but with abundant shrewdness and perspicacity. The philosophy of Malebranche is better in practice than in theory.

Side by side with this Christian philosopher, intimate with him and with all the eminent preachers of his age, and yielding to none in the sincerity and loftiness of his views, our attention is arrested by a Christian moralist. Born at Dourdan, Jean de la Bruyère<sup>1</sup> began life as a *conseiller-trésorier* at Caen ; but Bossuet came to know him, recognised his merits, and introduced him to the capital. In Paris he became tutor to Louis de Bourbon, grandson of

semble qu'on se fasse tort. On ne peut les élever sans se rabaisser soi-même ; et lorsqu'on les met au-dessous de soi, on croit en être plus grand. Mais, quand on aime les gens, on ne se fait aucun tort. Il semble, au contraire, que l'âme s'étende en se répandant dans les cœurs, et qu'elle se revête et se pare de la gloire qui environne ses amis. Ainsi, on se fait toujours aimer, pourvu qu'on se rende aimable ; mais on ne se fait pas toujours estimer, quelque mérite qu'on ait.

“ Quelles sont donc les qualités qui nous rendent aimables ? Rien n'est plus facile que de les découvrir. Ce n'est point avoir de l'esprit, de la science, un beau visage, un corps bien droit et bien formé, de la qualité, des richesses, ni même de la vertu ; ce n'est point précisément tout cela, car on peut avoir de l'aversion pour celui qui possède toutes ces qualités estimables. Quel donc ? C'est de paraître tel que les autres se persuadent qu'avec nous ils seront contents. . . . Ceux qui veulent se faire aimer, et qui ont bien de l'esprit, en doivent faire part aux autres. Qu'ils fassent si bien valoir les bonnes choses que les autres disent en leur présence, qu'avec eux chacun soit content de soi-même. Que celui qui a de la science n'enseigne point en maître les vérités dont il est convaincu ; mais qu'il ait le secret de faire naître insensiblement la lumière dans l'esprit de ceux qui l'écoutent ; de sorte que chacun s'en trouve éclairé sans la honte d'avoir été son disciple. Celui qui est libéral n'est point aimable s'il s'élève en se vantant de ses libéralités. En effet, il reproche ses faveurs à celui à qui il les fait par la confusion dont il le couvre. Mais celui qui fait part aux autres de son esprit et de sa science, aussi bien que de son argent et de sa grandeur, sans que personne s'en aperçoive et sans qu'il en tire aucun avantage, gagne nécessairement tous les cœurs par cette vertueuse libéralité ; seule, dis-je, vertueuse et charitable, seule généreuse et sincère. Car toute autre libéralité n'est qu'un pur effet de l'amour-propre ; toute autre est intéressée ou du moins fort mal régie.”

<sup>1</sup> 1646-1696.

the greatest of the Condés, and in the hôtel of that powerful family he found a residence to the day of his death, in addition to a pension of a thousand crowns. At the beginning of the year 1688 he published a translation of the *Characters* of Theophrastus,<sup>1</sup> from the Greek, to which he prefixed a short essay on his original, and to which he added his own *Characters or Morals of the Age*, observations on the society amidst which he lived, inserted under the name of an ancient author, who was less acute and less complete and elaborate than La Bruyère himself. Up to 1694 eight editions of the *Characters* appeared, and in every edition there were added some new ones. The original had only 418 characters, the second 762, and then they increased to 925, 997, 1073, and 1119. In his first chapter, *On Mind*, the author discourses about all the means ever invented by men to obtain influence, honours, power; and also in what men are great and generous; in the second, *On personal Merit*, he sketches the different kinds of merits and vanities, and amplifies his own saying, "Of many men only the name is of any value." The third chapter, *On Women*, is a gallery of feminine portraits in full length, and often too faithfully delineated, so that the generality leaves a painful impression on the mind. The next, by a natural transition, is *On the Heart*, and here love and friendship—placed by our moralist far above love—are treated. Then comes *On Society and Conversation*, in which all the faults and follies of mankind are exposed, and of which the conclusion is "The wise man sometimes avoids the world for fear of becoming weary." The sixth chapter, *On Wealth*, is perhaps the most masterly of all; the *parvenus* are depicted in indelible traits, above all the self-sufficient Giron, whilst the terrible picture of Phédon closes the chapter. His next, *On the Town*, is nearly a continuous raillery on those citizens who wish to ape the

<sup>1</sup> He wrote in the fourth century B.C.

vices and splendour of the great, whilst his chapter *On the Court* rails at the courtiers and their manners, ridicules even Versailles, and concludes with "A healthy mind receives at court a taste for solitude and retirement." The ninth chapter, *On the Great*, proves the boldness of La Bruyère by the unvarnished portraits which he has etched for all times. He says, amongst other things, that among the great "is hidden a malignant and corrupt sap under the outward covering of politeness. The people have scarcely any knowledge, and the great have no soul. Must I choose? I do not hesitate, I wish to belong to the people." The following, *On the Sovereign and the Republic*, advises to "think one's native country the best of all, and submit to its government;" but "is the flock made for the shepherd, or the shepherd for the flock?" Of course the whole concludes with a fulsome sketch of Louis XIV., without which I suppose the other truths would not have been allowed to pass. The other chapters *On Man*, *On Judgments*, *On Fashion*, and *On some Customs*, sketch the natural inclinations of man, his influence on society, and the reflex influence of society on him. He defines fashion "a tyrant of whom the action extends to all that concerns taste, manner of living, health, and even conscience." How well that last word brings before our eyes the courtly hypocrites and zealots of Louis XIV. La Bruyère discusses also some grammatical questions and the adoption and rejection of some words, in his chapter *On Certain Customs*; and it is interesting to observe how our moralist regrets the loss of many words, which are at present regularly used in French. The two last chapters, *On the Pulpit*, and *On Sceptics*, treat of religion, its influence on mankind, and contain also a refutation of atheism, and an attempt to prove the existence of a Deity. The last two lines are as follows:—"If people do not enjoy these Characters, I am astonished at it; and if people do enjoy them, I am also astonished at it."

In 1693 La Bruyère was admitted to the Academy; and tradition records of this event two or three self-contradictory anecdotes, which, however near they may be to the truth, clearly do the distinguished moralist a great injustice. It is stated, in the first place, that much opposition was displayed on the part of the Academicians against the candidate. The statement, little as we might be surprised at such a display of feeling in respect of an author who had been warned by a friend, M. de Malezieux, that by publishing his *Characters* he would attract many readers and many enemies, is in thorough contrast with the expressions made use of by La Bruyère himself in his introductory address at the Academy. "I valued your choice so highly," he says, "that I did not venture to offend, not even to infringe upon its independence by an unfortunate . . . solicitation. . . . You have granted it to me, gentlemen, and in so gracious a manner, with so unanimous a consent, that I owe it and consider it as due to your munificence alone. There is neither position, nor credit, nor wealth, nor titles, nor authority, nor favour, which could have influenced you in this choice; I have none of all these: everything was wanting to me; a work which has had some little success by its singularity, and whereof false, I say false and malignant applications might have injured me with persons less just and less enlightened than you, has been the only mediation which I have employed, and which you have received." He also declares in this address that "the glory of a sovereign consists in being beloved by his people;" and intones a paean of praise in honour of peace. In La Bruyère's words there seems to have been an ironical under-current, which is rather satirical upon the custom of soliciting votes; in any case the Academy decided that henceforward no introductory address should be delivered before having been submitted to a committee of its members. Several Academicians protested in the newspaper *Le Mercure*



against some of La Bruyère's remarks ; the latter replied, and published his speech with a rather satirical preface, and died suddenly, amidst these bickerings, in 1696.

An epigram<sup>1</sup> at La Bruyère's expense is laid to the charge of one or other of his colleagues, which I am loth to believe was written for him. Many men have entered the Academy with an epigram pinned to their coat-tails ; but this has been applied to one or two since La Bruyère's time, and, I doubt not, was applied to others before him.

The perversity which has thus made light of La Bruyère's dignity is matched by the inconsistency of his critics in successive generations. It was as a satirist that he was chiefly admired or disliked by his contemporaries, who recognised amongst themselves, or thought they recognised, the originals of many of his portraits, and perhaps neglected what he would have had them most regard for that upon which he placed least stress. In the age which came after he was regarded more nearly in his truest and best light, as a moralist ; whilst recent generations have been content as a rule to consider the manner rather than the matter of his work, extolling the writer and the artist above the moralist and the satirist.<sup>2</sup> For no doubt he was both, and no doubt also he excelled more in his characters or portraits of men, and in the earnestness with which he drew serious lessons from what he saw and heard, than in the style with which he expressed himself. His style was good, but it was not in the grand manner of Bossuet, Fléchier, and Malebranche. He resembled all these in his refinement, his lofty moral sense, his protest against the recklessness of thought and action which distinguished the age of Louis XIV. ; but he was not an orator. According to Boileau, indeed, who was

<sup>1</sup> "Quand La Bruyère se présente,            Pour faire un nombre de quarante  
Pourquoi faut-il crier haro ?            Ne fallait-il pas un zéro ?"

<sup>2</sup> The observation is M. Charles Asselineau's, a recent editor of La Bruyère

only ten years older than La Bruyère, he exhibited signs of the decline of the Augustan period; and it was not altogether either jealousy or the severity of a critic which dictated the judgment. For though the *Characters* of La Bruyère are one mass of moral maxims and shrewd observations, comparable with Pascal for their lofty tone, and with La Rochefoucauld for their force, the literary value of the work suffers by juxtaposition with the finished essays of its author's more eloquent contemporaries.

Yet La Bruyère knew the secret of his art, and it is only in external form and rhetorical polish that his style can be placed second to that of Bossuet and Bourdaloue. Half-a-dozen of his axioms are sufficient, when well digested and carried out, to train a powerful writer. "The whole spirit of authorship," he says, "consists in defining well and painting well." And again: "Amongst all the expressions which can present any one of our thoughts, there is but one which is the right one;" or at all events, which is the best. "There is a point of perfection in art, as there is of goodness and ripeness in nature: he who feels and loves it has perfect taste; he who feels it not, and who loves something beneath or beyond it, has faulty taste. . . . Moses, Homer, Plato, Virgil, Horace, are above other writers only by their expressions and their images; you must express the truth in order to write naturally, forcibly, delicately." And the author who has this high conception of his art, and who repudiates for the exercise of his talent any topic which is not consistent with the true—that is, with the just and honourable—"demands from men a greater and rarer success than praise, or even rewards, namely, that he should render them better." Such is La Bruyère's theory of authorship. Is it a theory consistent with the highest artistic principles? Many have said not—that art cannot take cognisance of the artist's desire to make men better by his works, except perhaps in the sense

which identifies goodness with intellectual elevation and a refined taste. From an independent point of view it would seem possible that the literary decline and moral degradation of France, which began to manifest itself towards the close of Louis XIV.'s reign, might have been less extensive if La Bruyère's fellow-countrymen had more generally adopted his theory.

## CHAPTER V.

## § 1. DECLINE OF THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV.

AMONGST the last words of Bossuet he is reported to have said: "I foresee that strong minds may be discredited, not for any abhorrence of their opinions, but because men will regard everything with indifference, except pleasures and business." The prediction was amply verified. At the moment when it was uttered, early in the eighteenth century, the social and literary causes which were to bring it about were already actively at work; and Bossuet himself, directly and indirectly, had done much to set them in motion. To him, more than to any one else, was due the triumph of form over matter in the theological and moral literature of the age; and the spirit of La Bruyère was as much a reaction against as a decline from the sterile eloquence of his predecessors. With Bossuet and his school the writer displaced the philosopher and the teacher: La Bruyère philosophised and taught, but all that he obtained was to be handed down to posterity merely as a writer of the second order. An age of indifference succeeded an age of exquisiteness of form as naturally as temporary dimness of sight succeeds to dazzling splendour. In another and more special direction Bossuet had contributed to produce that which he lamented. The revocation of the edict of Nantes, the persecution, massacre, and flight of the Protestants, were disastrous to the country in more than one way. The attempt to reduce religious opinion to a dead level



of uniformity could only result, as it has resulted over and over again, in uniform indifference: the more nearly the attempt has ever succeeded, the more nearly has the country upon which the experiment has been tried approached to scepticism and unbelief. Moreover, the actual decrease of the population, and the loss sustained by the intellectual and industrial resources of France, from this short-sighted oppression, had become painfully manifest even before the death of Bossuet. The Memoirs of the Intendants, forty-two volumes, wherefrom Boulainvilliers prepared a work on the *Condition of France*, published in 1727, bear witness to the conspicuousness of this amongst the other causes of national disaster. "War, the mortality (of 1693), the billeting and continual marches of soldiery, the militia, the taxes, and the flight of the Huguenots"—to which we may add the absence from their estates of the nobles, their pecuniary embarrassments and gradual diminution—"have ruined this land." Such is the confession or complaint of intendant after intendant in every district of France.

The material causes of misery, if not the most powerful, produced the most manifest results. The taxation of the people had grown oppressive and unwieldy in the last degree, and the king's ministers were either callous to the complaints which reached them, or tried in vain to stem the evil. Vauban, Fénelon, de Boisguilbert, and others, strove manfully to introduce reforms, even though it were but in the incidence and collection of the taxes; but their efforts were at once rendered nugatory by the obstinacy and selfishness of Louis. In 1707 Vauban published a volume entitled *Projet de Dîme Royale*, dealing with the subject, and presented it to the king.<sup>1</sup> The latter, surrounded as he was by a crowd of sycophants and

<sup>1</sup> At the same time (1707) Augustin Le Pesant de Boisguilbert published in Paris his *Factum de la France*, in which he proposed to substitute a sort of income-tax for the harassing poll-tax. It was calculated that the change would have quite trebled the yield to the treasury; and yet de Boisguilbert's book shared the fate of Vauban's, and its author was sent into exile. He

interested advisers, ordered the obnoxious book to be placed in the pillory; and its author survived only six weeks<sup>1</sup> this brutal return for half-a-century of faithful services. At Querci, Périgord, and elsewhere, the overburdened populace broke into open revolt. France was, in fact, absolutely ruined, and already there were those who perceived that nothing but a revolution would save her. The effect of war, poverty, exile, disease, and famine, upon the population of the country was disastrous in the extreme. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century the census fell from twenty-two or twenty-three millions to not more than nineteen millions. In the quarter of a century preceding the year 1715, it has been estimated<sup>2</sup> that the population had diminished by one-third. And amidst all this misery and wretchedness the court maintained its brilliancy, its sumptuousness, its virtual indifference to everything outside the daily routine of pleasure and etiquette.

## § 2. FÉNELON.

Amongst the men who laboured to rescue their country from its sorry plight, the one with whom we have most to do was François de Salignac de la Motte Fénelon,<sup>3</sup> a native of Querci. Entering the church at an early age, and being distinguished for his abilities and persuasive talents, he was sent in 1686 on a mission to the Protestants of Poitou and Saintonge, at the same time that Bourdaloue went to Languedoc, Fléchier to Brittany, and others to other parts of the kingdom. These missions were held at the time to have been successful ;

published a refutation of Vauban's book, and was the writer of several other financial and economical works: a *Détail de la France*, first published in Holland in 1695, and republished in Paris in 1707, and, of course, forbidden; a *Dissertation sur les Richesses l'argent et les tributs*, etc.

<sup>1</sup> So says Saint-Simon. Vauban was, however, seventy-four years old.

<sup>2</sup> H. Taine, *L'Ancien Régime*, book v. ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1651-1715.

and undoubtedly the work of conciliation was far more consonant with Fénelon's disposition than the policy of persecution which commended itself to many of his contemporaries. On his return we hear of him as amongst the friends and prudent counsellors of Madame de Maintenon, whom he gradually endeavoured to employ as a lever upon the mind of the king. The young Duke of Burgundy, the grandson of Louis XIV.,<sup>1</sup> became his pupil;<sup>2</sup> and Fénelon trained him with such good results as to have induced many a regret amongst the Frenchmen of a later generation that he did not live to occupy the throne. The views, as well as the acts of Fénelon, were bold; his ability for the part which he undertook may be questioned, though the difficulty, if not the utter impossibility of his task, cannot be overrated. In one of his letters to Madame de Maintenon he speaks of their common political conduct as the "siege of the king," in order to govern him as he will be governed. The mainspring of Fénelon's actions is to be found in a zealous love for his fellow-men, which he exhibited, it may be, with a certain lack of prudence and worldly wisdom, but which was undoubtedly the genuine basis of his public career. "I love my family," he said, "better than myself, my country better than my family, humanity better than my country." And it is precisely in this order that he commended himself to the affection and esteem of his contemporaries, and of posterity. It may readily be conceived that this disposition of mind was little in unison with that of the king and his court, who had never been wont to give much consideration to the welfare of the masses. To them the natural relation between people and monarch was much the same as the relation of source and reservoir; so long as the nation continued to pay whatever taxes were demanded from it, and to fill up the ranks of the army as fast as they were thinned by death or disease.

<sup>1</sup> 1682-1712.<sup>2</sup> 1689.

all was considered as going well. But Fénelon represented a new order of things ; he was unconsciously the progenitor of Voltaire and Rousseau ; he breathed the spirit of a reaction which was the necessary consequence of the splendid and selfish royal dynasty ; destined to advance slowly and to exert its influence with difficulty, but destined also to transfer the sovereignty of France from a king to a democracy.

Fénelon was dissatisfied with the apparent futility of his indirect efforts to impress Louis with a sense of the gravity of the situation, and he adopted a bold course for the more speedy attainment of his end. In the year 1693—the year of a widespread and disastrous famine in France—the king received an anonymous letter, “which in the opinion of the writer, ought to be the *Mew, Tekel, Upharsin* of the feast of Balshazzar, and which at all events sounded in the ears of Louis as a terrible discord amidst the perpetual hymns of Versailles.”<sup>1</sup> It began by protesting the author’s respect and attachment to the king, and then proceeded to paint in vivid colours the actual condition of the country. It acknowledged the justice and loftiness of the monarch’s mind, and then proceeded to reproach him with his selfish pursuit of pleasure and glory, with his toleration of unjust ministers, with his unjustifiable encroachment upon the territory of his neighbours, with the impoverishment of France for the maintenance of courtly splendour and pleasure. The people died of hunger, the fields were suffered to lie fallow, commerce languished, national bankruptcy was imminent.

“The whole of France is but one great hospital, desolated and without provisions ; the people who have loved you so much, begin to lose their love, their confidence, even their respect. Popular agitations, unknown for so long, are becoming frequent. Paris herself is not free from them. The magistrates are compelled to tolerate the insolence of the mutinous secretly, and to supply

<sup>1</sup> Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. 186.



money for their pacification. You are reduced to the lamentable necessity of either leaving sedition unpunished, or massacring the people whom you have driven to despair . . . and who perish, day after day, of diseases sprung from famine. Whilst they lack bread, you yourself lack money, and you will not see the extremity to which you are brought. . . . God holds his hand outstretched above you, but he is slow to strike, because He pities a prince who has been all his life besieged by flatterers, and because, moreover, your enemies are also his.<sup>1</sup> But He will know well how to distinguish his just cause from yours, which is not so, and to humiliate in order to convert you ; for you will not be a Christian save in humiliation. You do not love God ; you do not even fear Him except with the fear of a slave ; it is hell, not God, which you fear. Your religion consists wholly in superstitions, in petty superficial observances. You refer everything to yourself, as though you were the God of the world."

He alludes to the timidity of the best of the king's advisers, and exclaims :—

"That which they ought to tell you and do not, is this : You must make peace, and expiate by this degradation all the glory which you have made your idol. You must restore at once to your enemies, in order to save the state, conquests which you cannot retain without injustice."

It required the moral courage of a Fénelon to write this, even anonymously ; but it was clearly not calculated to produce the effect which its author desired. As Madame de Maintenon said, in a letter to Cardinal de Noailles, it served "rather to irritate and discourage the king than to make him retrace his steps." Nothing effectual was done to overcome the crisis : tax after tax was still imposed or aggravated ; and, as Voltaire cynically puts it, "men died of misery to the tune of *Te Deums*." Louis does not seem to have been aware of the authorship of Fénelon's letter ; or if he was aware of it he concealed the fact, which is not very probable. Shortly after its receipt, early in 1695, he nominated the successful

<sup>1</sup> The Protestants to wit.

tutor of his grandson archbishop of Cambrai. The honour was perhaps intended only as a preface to disgrace ; for the king, who could not but have perceived that Fénelon was not in harmony with the sentiments of his court, took occasion to engage him in conversation, and to elicit his candid opinions. When it was over he said to those who surrounded him, " I have just been speaking with the most refined and most fanciful man in my kingdom." That was the manner in which Louis was wont to pronounce the disgrace of his courtiers ; and Fénelon understood it. But what the monarch had begun it remained for Bossuet to complete. Fénelon had for some time been inclining towards that mysticism in religion of which Madame de la Mothe-Guyon was the boldest exponent, but for which his ardent admiration of François de Sales was quite sufficient, in his case, to account. Bossuet attacked him with his wonted severity. He called upon Fénelon to condemn the writings of Madame Guyon, and to give his assent to a work which he was about to publish, under the title of an *Instruction on the Conditions of Prayer*, in which he ventured to mark out the boundaries between true piety and dangerous illusions. Fénelon declined, and published on his own part an *Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints upon the Inner Life*.<sup>1</sup> His aged adversary was beside himself with horror at the appearance of this book ; rushed off to the king, and besought his pardon " for not having earlier revealed to him the fanaticism of his episcopal colleague." The king listened to Bossuet, and so did public opinion. Fénelon, hopelessly disgraced, was ordered to retire to his diocese, and pressure was put upon Pope Innocent XII. to procure a condemnation of the *Maxims*, which was in fact pronounced from Rome upwards of two years after the publication of the book. Fénelon lived long enough to regain his position in the general esteem of his fellow-countrymen ; but the king was never reconciled to him.

The picture which an eminent historian<sup>1</sup> draws of this conspicuous figure in the history and literature of France is so vivid that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of transcribing it :—

“To recall the impression produced by the first sight of Fénelon’s face is to describe Fénelon completely. Never was a man more fully revealed by his physiognomy ; the fine proportions of his leading features and of his whole person, the fire of his eyes tempered by an incomparable sweetness, his serious and smiling mouth, half opened as though to permit his soul to breathe over all that surrounds him, exercised in his presence an almost irresistible seduction, inspired men with a powerful sympathy, and women with a pure and impassioned attraction which seems to belong not to the world. We feel that, in this tender nature, the heart inherited all that was discarded from the senses by the vows of his profession ; but this is not the hopeless victory of Pascal : the struggle against nature has left but feeble traces on this radiant face ; scarcely does a vestige of melancholy mingle a shadow with the serene joy which breathes upon it. Spinoza knew only by the stern understanding the joy of the soul which possesses God ; Fénelon knows it by the feelings. . . . A comparison has often been drawn between the ‘eagle of Meaux’ (Bossuet) and the ‘swan of Cambrai,’ (Fénelon)—the one impresses, the other softens ; the one inspires fear of God, the other, confidence in God ; the one, even while repudiating the sectarian spirit of the Jansenists, clung to the harsh morality of Port-Royal ; the other, not less above suspicion in the purity of his life, teaches less sombre doctrines. He has no hatred of the present life : he does not say, like Pascal, that the ‘*I*’ is worthy of hatred ; he would have us bear with ourselves, as we bear with our neighbour. . . . ‘Enlarge your heart !’ he cries. In him everything breathes that fulness and happy harmony of life which the poets of the Middle Age expressed by the fine word *liesse*, and which they did not separate from valour and virtue. Never did the broad path of Christianity find such an apostle.”

<sup>1</sup> Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. p. 299. Let me once and for all acknowledge the great obligations which I owe to that masterly history.

In addition to the works already mentioned, Fénelon wrote, early in life, a number of *Dialogues on Eloquence*, not published until after his death ; and a *Treatise on the Existence of God*—his argument being based chiefly on the beauty and system of nature, and on the analogy, effect to cause, from the visible to the invisible, from the provable to that which is not capable of physical proof. His *Treatise on the Education of Girls* was written to assist the Duchess de Beauvilliers in the training of her daughters. The *Treatise on the Ministry of Pastors* was a defence of the apostolic succession of the ministry, and its good reception by the authorities led to his being selected for the mission to Poitou. His *Fables* and *Dialogues of the Dead*, written after his appointment, in 1689, as the tutor of the young Duke of Burgundy, were composed expressly for his pupil ; and he did not hesitate to condemn by this medium the “barbarous governments where there are no laws except the pleasure of a single man,” and to declare to the grandson of Louis XIV. that “all wars are civil wars,” and that “each individual owes infinitely more to the human race, which is the grand country, than to the particular country in which he is born.”

But the work by which Fénelon is most widely known outside the pale of political history is his prose-epic *Telemachus*, also composed mainly on behalf of his pupil, and not published until after the archbishop's exile from the court, in 1699, and then only through the faithlessness of a servant. It was of set purpose that Fénelon chose a prose form for this poem ; he rebelled against the trammels of versification, and though no doubt he could have written either blank verse or rhyme elegantly, he would have done it laboriously, and the result would probably have been less satisfactory than what we now possess. The plan of the book is simple : it records the adventures of Prince Telemachus, in search of his father Ulysses, journeying in the company of his friend Mentor



who is really Minerva, the goddess of wisdom ; and it is written upon the model of the *Odyssey*. The author's opinions on government, education, worship, and the like, are expressed clearly and boldly ; and though he distinctly states that he had only written it to amuse and instruct his noble pupil, it is impossible to read the book and not to perceive that it abounds with manifest applications to the circumstances of France at the time. Many critics have stated that though it contains political and administrative views in direct contradiction to the government of Louis XIV., it does not directly allude to, and does not attack it in a satirical manner. I do not see how the words "amuse and instruct" are in contradiction with such allusions, but I prefer to let the French historian speak, to whom I am already so greatly indebted : "Some have chosen to deny the allusions of *Télémaque*, but they abound ; the whole book, so to say, consists of allusions, and this was inevitable and involuntary. Sesostris, Idomeneus more particularly ; Idomeneus, trained in ideas of pride and haughtiness, too much absorbed in the details of affairs, neglecting the cultivation of the land in order to give himself up to splendid architecture, is Louis XIV. ; Tyre is Holland, Protesilas is Louvois ; the coalition against Idomeneus is the league of Augsburg ; the mountain-castles are the towns on the Rhine and in Belgium, 'fortresses built on the land of others.' Certain discourses of Mentor to Idomeneus precisely recall the anonymous letter to Louis XIV. On the other hand, the philosophic excuses which Mentor gives for the faults of kings apply equally to Louis. Again when Mentor says to Telemachus : 'The gods will expect more from you than from Idomeneus, because you have known the truth from your youth, and you have never been exposed to the seductions of a too great prosperity,' this is evidently Fénelon speaking to the grandson of the great king."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. p. 310.

In the following description of Tyre and the Phœnicians, judge whether Holland and the Dutch, as they existed a couple of centuries ago, were not in the writer's mind :—

“Unfavourable winds detained us for some time at Tyre. I took advantage of this sojourn to obtain information on the manners of the Phœnicians, so celebrated amongst all known nations. I wondered at the fortunate situation of this great town, which is upon an island, surrounded by the sea. The neighbouring coast is delightful by its fertility, by the exquisite fruits which it yields, by the number of towns and villages almost continuous, and again by the sweetness of its climate ; for the mountains shield this coast from the burning south winds : it is refreshed by the north wind, which blows from the sea-coast. . . . Here the lowing cattle are to be seen grazing, the bleating sheep with their tender lambs skipping in the grass : here flow a thousand streams of clear water. Beneath these pastures, again, you may see the foot of the mountain, which is like a garden : spring and autumn reign there together, mingling flowers and fruits. Never has the pestiferous breath of the south, drying and scorching all, nor the harsh north wind, dared to efface the bright colours which adorn this garden. It is close to this beautiful coast that the isle on which the town of Tyre is built rises from the sea. This great town seems to float upon the waters, and to be the queen of the sea. Merchants come thither from all parts of the world, and its inhabitants are themselves the most famous merchants in the universe. When you enter this town you imagine at first that it is the common town of the nations and the centre of their commerce. It has two great quays like two arms which stretch into the sea, and embrace a vast harbour, into which the winds cannot enter. In this harbour you see as it were a forest of masts of ships ; and these ships are so numerous that you can hardly perceive the sea which bears them. All the citizens busy themselves in commerce, and their great wealth never sets them against the labour necessary to increase it. You see there on all sides the fine linen of Egypt, and the twice-dipped Tyrian purple, of a wonderful splendour ; this double dye is so bright that time cannot fade it : it is used for fine wools, which are

adorned with an embroidery of gold and silver. The Phœnicians have the commerce of all nations as far as the Straits of Cadiz, and they have even penetrated into the vast ocean which surrounds the whole earth. They have also made long voyages on the Red Sea; and it is by this route that they go to search for the unknown isles of gold, perfumes, and animals of various kinds which are not seen elsewhere. I could not sate my eyes with the magnificent spectacle of this great town where everything was in motion. I did not see here, as in the towns of Greece, idle and inquisitive men going in quest of news into the public squares, or gazing at the strangers who arrive in the harbour. The men are occupied in unloading their vessels, in carrying or selling their merchandise, in arranging their warehouses, and in keeping an exact account of what is due to them from foreign merchants. The women never cease spinning their wool, or working designs in embroidery, or folding the rich stuffs.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Les vents contraires nous retinrent assez longtemps à Tyr. Je profitai de ce séjour pour connaître les mœurs des Phéniciens, si célèbres dans toutes les nations connues. J’admirais l’heureuse situation de cette grande ville, qui est au milieu de la mer dans une île. La côte voisine est délicieuse par sa fertilité, par les fruits exquis qu’elle porte, par le nombre de villes et de villages qui se touchent presque; enfin par la douceur de son climat: car les montagnes mettent cette côte à l’abri des vents brûlants du midi; elle est rafraîchie par le vent du nord qui souffle du côté de la mer. . . . C’est là qu’on voit errer les taureaux qui mugissent, les brebis qui bêlent avec leurs tendres agneaux bondissant sur l’herbe: là coulent mille ruisseaux d’une eau claire. Enfin, on voit au-dessous de ces pâturages le pied de la montagne, qui est comme un jardin: le printemps et l’automne y règnent ensemble pour y joindre les fleurs et les fruits. Jamais ni le souffle empesté du midi, qui sèche et qui brûle tout, ni le rigoureux aquilon, n’ont osé effacer les vives couleurs qui ornent ce jardin.

“C’est auprès de cette belle côte que s’élève dans la mer l’île où est bâtie la ville de Tyr. Cette grande ville semble nager au-dessus des eaux, et être la reine de la mer. Les marchands y abordent de toutes les parties du monde, et ses habitants sont eux-mêmes les plus fameux marchands qu’il y ait dans l’univers. Quand on entre dans cette ville, on croit d’abord que ce n’est point une ville qui appartienne à un peuple particulier, mais qu’elle est la ville commune de tous les peuples, et le centre de leur commerce. Elle a deux grands môles semblables à deux bras qui s’avancent dans la mer, et qui embrassent un vaste port où les vents ne peuvent entrer. Dans ce port on voit comme une forêt de mâts de navires; et ces navires sont si nombreux qu’à peine peut-

This is a perfect picture of Holland, and of Amsterdam, with the exception of "the mountains," which do not exist there.

### § 3. MASSILLON.

A pulpit orator of the eighteenth rather than of the seventeenth century, who, though of the school of Bossuet, and of the later days of Louis XIV., was only thirty-one years old when Voltaire was born, and stood, before his death, in direct contrast with the innovating spirit of the younger generation, Jean Baptiste Massillon<sup>1</sup> seems to demand our attention before we proceed to gather up the final threads of the Augustan age ; the more so, as during the last twenty-five years of his long life he resided continually in his diocese. He was another of the noble spirits cherished and ripened in the seclusion of the Oratory, which he entered in his nineteenth year : another instance of the precocious talent so amply mani-

on découvrir la mer qui les porte. Tous les citoyens s'appliquent au commerce, et leurs grandes richesses ne les dégoûtent jamais du travail nécessaire pour les augmenter. On y voit de tous côtés le fin lin d'Égypte, et la pourpre tyrienne deux fois teinte, d'un éclat merveilleux : cette double teinture est si vive, que le temps ne peut l'effacer : on s'en sert pour des laines fines qu'on rehausse d'une broderie d'or et d'argent. Les Phéniciens ont le commerce de tous les peuples jusqu'au détroit de Gades, et ils ont même pénétré dans le vaste Océan qui environne toute la terre. Ils ont fait aussi de longues navigations sur la mer Rouge ; et c'est par ce chemin qu'ils vont chercher dans des îles inconnues de l'or, des parfums, et divers animaux qu'on ne voit point ailleurs.

"Je ne pouvais rassasier mes yeux du spectacle magnifique de cette grande ville où tout était en mouvement. Je n'y voyais point, comme dans les villes de la Grèce, des hommes oisifs et curieux, qui vont chercher des nouvelles dans la place publique, ou regarder les étrangers qui arrivent sur le port. Les hommes sont occupés à décharger leurs vaisseaux, à transporter leurs marchandises ou à les vendre, à ranger leurs magasins, et à tenir un compte exact de ce qui leur est dû par les négociants étrangers. Les femmes ne cessent jamais ou de filer des laines, ou de faire des dessins de broderie, ou de plier les riches étoffes."

<sup>1</sup> 1663-1742.



fested in the sacred annals of his time. He preached with great success, first at Montpellier, then at Paris, where he showed himself well able to continue, before the court of the *Grand Monarque*, and later before that of the Regency, the rôle which had been initiated by the masters of the new school of pulpit oratory, of which he was a follower, but no mere disciple. There are features in his eloquence for which we might vainly look in Bossuet or even in Bourdaloue. Which of the two last-named would have dared to speak before the assembled court as Massillon spoke in his Lent sermons for the year 1701? "Do you not, perhaps," he asked his haughty listeners, "turn the public misery to your advantage? Do you not, perhaps, make of indigence a barbarous occasion of gain? Do you not, perhaps, virtually spoil the unfortunate, whilst affecting to extend to them a succouring hand? And do you not know the inhuman art of profiting by the tears and necessities of your brethren?"<sup>1</sup> The terrible insinuation is eloquent both of the texture of the times and of the courage of the preacher—a courage which prevented him from preaching before the court during the last eleven years of Louis' reign. The Regent appointed him, however, Bishop of Clermont in 1717, and the following year he preached before the young king and the court the Lent sermons, which, under the name of *Petit Carême*, are by many considered as his master work. Massillon stands out, during the later years of his life, like the last great rock in a boiling sea of scepticism and immorality, strong in the simple grandeur of his incorruptibility, firm in his resistance to a flood which had overwhelmed so many of his contemporaries and of his cloth. The spirit of Massillon's religious doctrine seems to have hit the mean between the uncompromising severity of Bossuet and the mild tolerance of Fénelon; and it is a true mark of his genius and of the steadfastness of his

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on *Almsgiving*.

personal religion and morality, that the excesses and ribaldry with which the regency was so deeply stained, did not force him against his nature into a morose asceticism, as with a weaker man they might have done. He was received into the Academy in 1719, on the death of the Abbé de Louvois, and in his introductory speech he declaimed against the abuses of the stage; but he says nothing which can be construed into a reproach against the stage itself. In one of his sermons, again, he commends the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which, as a consistent Roman Catholic, I suppose he was obliged to do; but, to make up for it, he pointedly goes back to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in order to express his horror at the crime. In 1715 it fell to his lot to preach the funeral oration on the death of Louis XIV., and those who may have expected that they would hear nothing but abject flattery and glorification of the dead, must have been greatly disappointed. "God alone is great, my brethren!" he exclaimed to the court; nor did he omit, then and on many subsequent occasions, to draw attention to the duties rather than to the majesty of the monarch.

Massillon made one gigantic mistake in his life, which must have produced the worst possible effect on the minds of religious men in France, and which goes far to dim the splendour of an otherwise irreproachable career. He stood sponsor for the doctrine and good morals of the sceptical and dissolute Dubois,<sup>1</sup> the worst of the reprobate clique whose vices rendered the court of the regency infamous; and he assisted in the consecration of the future cardinal to the archbishopric of Cambrai.<sup>2</sup> It is not apparent what kind or degree of pressure was put upon Massillon in order to secure his services. That Dubois was powerful and astute needs no other proof than the fact that he had induced George I. of England to plead with the regent for his preferment, and

<sup>1</sup> 1656-1723.<sup>2</sup> 1720.

that he subsequently found means to obtain the red hat from Rome.

Massillon effected by pathos, indignation, or exhortation, what Bourdaloue had effected by force of logic and declamation; and his eloquence has been extolled by some of his fellow-countrymen above that of his great predecessors in the pulpit. His style is pure, nervous, and goes straight to the heart; his manly courage adds to it a conviction which we shall seek in vain in the words of men not thoroughly genuine or straightforward. He has been called the very first of French orators, and a model of accomplished eloquence.<sup>1</sup> Compare with the adulation lavished by Bossuet on Louis XIV. the following apostrophe to Louis XV.,<sup>2</sup> from a sermon by Massillon on the *Humanity of the great towards the people*, taken from the *Petit Carême*.

“Listen to this multitude whom Jesus Christ this day feeds in the desert; they would make him king over them, would ‘seize him and make him their king.’<sup>3</sup> Already they build Him a throne in their hearts, not being able to raise Him to that of David and the kings of Judah, his ancestors: they acknowledge his claim to royalty only by his humanity. Ah! if men elected their own masters, it would be no longer the noble or the valiant whom they would choose; it would be the most tender, the most humane masters, who might be at the same time their fathers.

“Happy, great God, the nation to whom Thou in thy pity dost assign a sovereign of this character! Fortunate omens appear to promise it to us; clemency and majesty, written on the brow of this august infant, already bespeak to us the felicity of our people; his sweet and beneficent inclinations daily confirm and increase our hopes. Cherish then, O my God, these first pledges of our fortune. Make him as tender towards the people as the pious prince to whom he owes his birth, and whom Thou didst but hold out to the earth. He desired to reign, Thou knowest, only to render us happy; our miseries were his

<sup>1</sup> By Maury and Voltaire.

<sup>2</sup> 1710-1774.

<sup>3</sup> St. John vi. 15.

miseries, our afflictions were his, and his heart was but one heart with our own. May clemency and mercy, then, increase with age in this precious infant, and flow in him together with the blood of a father so humane and so merciful! May the sweetness and majesty of his countenance be ever the image of those within his soul! May his people be to him always as dear as he is to his people! May he take from the tenderness of the nation towards him the rule and measure of the love which he ought to have for it! Thus will he be as great as his great-grandfather (Louis XIV.), more glorious than all his ancestors; and his humanity will be the source of our felicity on earth and of his happiness in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his sermons Massillon wrote *Panegyrics of the Saints, Ecclesiastical Conferences*, considered by Maury his best work, *Paraphrases of the Psalms, Synodal Discourses*, and *Episcopal Charges*.

<sup>1</sup> "Écoutez cette multitude que Jésus-Christ rassasie aujourd'hui dans le désert; ils veulent l'établir roi sur eux : *ut raperent eum et facerent eum regem*. Ils lui dressent déjà un trône dans leur cœur, ne pouvant le faire remonter encore sur celui de David et des rois de Juda ses ancêtres : ils ne reconnaissent son droit à la royauté que par son humanité. Ah! si les hommes se donnaient des maîtres, ce ne serait ni les plus nobles, ni les plus vaillants qu'ils choisiraient; ce serait les plus tendres, les plus humains, des maîtres qui fussent en même temps leurs pères.

"Heureuse la nation, grand Dieu, à qui vous destinez dans votre miséricorde un souverain de ce caractère! D'heureux présages semblent nous le promettre; la clémence et la majesté, peintes sur le front de cet auguste enfant, nous annoncent déjà la félicité de nos peuples : ses inclinations douces et bienfaisantes rassurent et font croître tous les jours nos espérances. Cultivez donc, ô mon Dieu, ces premiers gages de notre bonheur. Rendez-le aussi tendre pour les peuples que le prince pieux auquel il doit la naissance, et que vous n'avez fait que montrer à la terre. Il ne voulait régner, vous le savez, que pour nous rendre heureux; nos misères étaient ses misères, nos afflictions étaient les siennes, et son cœur ne faisait qu'un cœur avec le nôtre. Que la clémence et la miséricorde croissent donc avec l'âge dans cet enfant précieux, et coulent en lui avec le sang d'un père si humain et si miséricordieux! que la douceur et la majesté de son front soit toujours une image de celle de son âme! Que son peuple lui soit aussi cher qu'il est lui-même cher à son peuple! Qu'il prenne dans la tendresse de la nation pour lui la règle et la mesure de l'amour qu'il doit avoir pour elle! Par là il sera aussi grand que son bisaiëul, plus glorieux que tous ses ancêtres; et son humanité sera la source de notre félicité sur la terre et de son bonheur dans le ciel."



## § 4. A SPIRITUAL FEMALE AUTHOR AND A SCEPTIC.

Madame de la Mothe-Guyon,<sup>1</sup> of whom we have already made mention, a young and attractive widow, who devoted herself to a religious life, and became the Mère Angélique of a sort of amorous mysticism only less pronounced than the exaggerated quietism of the Spaniard Molinos,<sup>2</sup> is a notable figure in the later decades of the seventeenth century. The spirit of her devotion may well have been inherited direct from Saint Theresa and Saint François de Sales ; but in her mouth the doctrine became an aggravated sentimentalism, leading to the utter neglect of all worldly and social duties, and not without danger of inducing the vices natural to idleness and excess of sentiment. She wrote more than one work. Her *Short and Easy Means of praying with the Heart*, establishes the principle which underlies her philosophy of religion. For the Christian, she maintains, it is sufficient, and even advisable, that in his communing with God he should dispense with the use of words, and suffer his heart to be moved by divine impulse, to feel rather than think his vows. To this end seclusion and silence are to be desired, though not absolutely necessary, and by this means the heart is engaged in an unceasing act of worship, and becomes immersed in the "ocean of divinity ;" a habit which might be so induced and cultivated that "shepherds watching their flocks would possess the spirit of the ancient anchorites, and labourers guiding the ploughshare would commune happily with God ; all vice would be banished in a short time, and the kingdom of God would be realised on earth." Others more fortunate, to whom bodily activity is not a necessity, might attain the

<sup>1</sup> 1648-1717<sup>2</sup> 1627-1696.

condition of complete passiveness, and might adore the Divinity with a repose of body and soul equal to His own. The heart, plunged in such ecstasy, would be identified with the heart of God; all external things would become indifferent to it, and crime would have no power to sully it.

Such is the teaching unfolded in the *Short and Easy Means*, expanded in the *Spiritual Torrents*, which brought down persecution on the head of Madame Guyon, but which previously enlisted for her the sympathies of Fénelon, of Madame de Maintenon, even of the sisterhood of Saint-Cyr. In the result, this new-fangled quietism was checked and almost suppressed; and its high-priestess, imprisoned at Vincennes, retracted her opinions, though without regaining her liberty.

Charles de Saint-Evremond,<sup>1</sup> a nonagenarian, who took part in nearly the whole literary activity of the seventeenth century, and who yet died inspired with the riper ideas of the eighteenth century, was at once a classical scholar, a commentator, a critic, a moralist, and a historian. Born at Coutances, in Normandy, he commenced an adventurous career as a soldier, and wielded the pen as well as the sword during the disturbances of the Fronde. Independent in thought as he was bold in expression, he held aloof from the tide of flattery which greeted the earlier successes of Louis XIV., and gave grievous offence to that monarch by writing a satirical letter to the Duke de Créqui about the treaty of the Pyrenees. This letter was never published, but the manuscript was discovered two years after it was written, in a box which the writer had entrusted to Madame Duplessis-Bellière, a friend of Fouquet. Saint-Evremond, finding himself in danger of the Bastille, fled from his native country, and went first to Holland, and afterwards to England, where

<sup>1</sup> 1613-1703

he resided for the remainder of his life, where he continued to write, and eventually secured a tomb in Westminster Abbey. His productions are numerous, though none of them has any very great pretensions. They were in high favour amongst his contemporaries ; a circumstance to which their necessarily surreptitious publication in France contributed not a little. It may be that a certain epicureanism of disposition alone prevented him from completing some work of wider scope and more thorough elaboration, which might have rendered him as famous as the best kindred spirits of his day. "In order to raise him to the first rank," a French critic<sup>1</sup> has said of Saint-Evremond, "he needed perhaps only the courage of an ambition able to apply itself perseveringly to lofty objects. Was he not so indifferent to his literary glory that he declared himself ready to sacrifice eight ages of glory to eight days of existence? And yet, although he wrote without thought of the morrow, for his own pleasure and that of the circles in which his energy was aroused, there are many enduring passages in the too confused variety of these detached fragments, wherein so much ingenious reason is combined with the caprices of an entertaining pen." Amongst Saint-Evremond's best known productions, which are read to this day, we may mention his *Parallel between Turenne and Condé*, his *Reflections on the varied Genius of the Roman People*, *Reflections on Tragedy and Comedy*, *Observations on Sallust and Tacitus*, and a *Discourse on Belles Lettres*.

### § 5. WRITERS OF MEMOIRS.

The political and social history of the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV. and of the regency is illustrated by the

<sup>1</sup> M. Gustave Merlet.

works of a number of writers of memoirs, more or less interesting and valuable for the light which they throw on the decline of France, and on its causes. Of these the most considerable, both for their revelations and for their literary style, are the *Memoirs* of Louis de Rouvroi, Duke de Saint-Simon.<sup>1</sup> The son of a lieutenant-general, he obtained his company in a cavalry regiment at the age of nineteen, and after serving with some distinction, left the army in 1702, and lived at court, in constant attendance upon the *Grand Monarque*, until the latter's death. Saint-Simon's *Memoirs* are not an afterthought of old age. He seems from the first to have conceived the idea of preserving a record of all that passed before his eyes ; and though he did not complete the task until close to the end of his life, he doubtless wrote much of what we now possess whilst yet a young man.

Scarcely of age, Saint-Simon allied himself with the reforming party at the court of Louis XIV., desiring in particular to assign limits to the royal prerogative, in the interest of his own order rather than of the commonalty, no doubt honestly believing that the greater influence of the nobility would tend to reduce the evils arising from an abuse of the absolute power of the crown. His advice and friendship were esteemed both by the Duke of Burgundy and by the Duke d'Orléans.<sup>2</sup> The latter, whom report accused of having exhausted the catalogue of human vices even before the death of his uncle, had been expressly excluded from the future government of the country by the will of Louis XIV. Saint-Simon advised him to appeal from that decision to that of the peers of France ; and when Philip became Regent he made the young duke a member of his council. In this capacity Saint-Simon displayed much boldness and no inconsiderable statesmanship and integrity. He advised, indeed, a universal bankruptcy and national repudiation ; but he

<sup>1</sup> 1675-1755.

<sup>2</sup> 1674-1723.



also counselled the convocation of the States-general, and did his best to induce moderation in the negotiations pending between France and the nations with whom she had so long waged war. His expedients for raising money were both numerous and shrewd: he extracted it from foreign nations as well as from his own fellow-countrymen; and yet his counsel led to the reform of the taxation in more than one respect, and to the judicious application of the money raised by his devices. If, however, Saint-Simon was one of the regent's friends in matters of state, he was by no means one of the *roués* with whom Philippe d'Orléans loved to associate: he was a friend of the morning, not of the evening,<sup>1</sup> and his reputation for uprightness of conduct cannot be gainsaid. It is true that he opposed the Regent's desire to re-admit the expatriated Protestants, and that in many other respects his advice was short-sighted and tortuous. Yet on the whole he was one of the most honest of the council of regency to which the affairs of France were committed.

Saint-Simon's *Memoirs* embrace the second half of the reign of Louis XIV., commencing with the year 1694, extending over the whole of the regency, and ending with the year 1725. Whenever he is able to speak of events which passed before his own eyes, and when he does not wish to give vent to his malice or to revenge himself upon his enemies, he depicts graphically, and with much of the instinct of a genuine historian. He may be a gossip, but he is a gossip of the best kind, conscious that what he relates may form part of the serious annals of his generation. His style may be peculiar, but it is concise, and at least his own; and it gains force by his originality, and often by its straightforwardness. He finds a phrase or a word for the man he wishes to sketch, and it will stick to him; whilst its truth is enhanced by a tinge of the

<sup>1</sup> M. Henri Martin.

causticity of Saint-Simon. He never forgets that he is a peer of the realm, with duties and privileges distinct from those of the monarch; and his pride of caste leads him to take a stand to some degree independent of the king himself, and of those through whom the king chose to act. He did not doubt, for instance, that Louis had married Madame de Maintenon; but he never consented to acknowledge and pay court to the latter as to a queen. He resented the conversion of the court into a clique, in which a woman was virtually absolute; and hence he never attained, under Louis, the influence possessed by many of his inferiors. With a great amount of haughtiness and even loftiness of character, Saint-Simon undoubtedly combines no small amount of pettiness. Nothing can be more ridiculous than the gravity with which he returns again and again to the question whether the first president of the council should wear his cap whilst officially engaged, or whether he should lay it before him on the table. This *affaire du bonnet* is, in fact, a curiosity of history; it is the gist of Saint-Simon's narrative, the type of the littlenesses which occupy at least one-half of the *Memoirs*. The lack of discernment and judgment which has led Saint-Simon into such a quagmire of unimportant trifles almost justifies the ridicule which has been cast upon him by many of his fellow-countrymen; but the really valuable portions of his book so far outweigh the remainder, that his credit as a writer of memoirs easily survives the disdain of his detractors.

Few portions of Saint-Simon's *Memoirs* are more graphic than those which reproduce the court of Louis XIV. with all the clearness and baldness of an unflattering photograph. The duke tells us the truth of the selfish king and his victims, and says of him, "Louis XIV., without the fear of the devil, which God left him even in his greatest disorders, would have been worshipped." Do we not see, as we read

this, the haughty, proud monarch, strutting about at Versailles, and acting his royal part; and do we not feel that there is no reservation in the mind of the writer? When passion does not sway him he is impartial: if anything, he liked Louis, and disliked Madame de Maintenon. Hear in a few words what he says of the relations existing between them when both were already old:—

“Madame de Maintenon, who was greatly afraid of the open air, and of many other unpleasant things, could not on this score obtain any immunity. All that she secured, under pretext of modesty and other reasons, was that she should travel alone; but, whatever her condition, she was obliged to set out, and to follow at the moment arranged, and to be at her destination, and duly prepared, before the king came to her. She made many journeys to Marly in a state in which it would not be fit for a servant to travel. She made one to Fontainebleau when it really could not be told whether she would not die on the road. In whatever condition she might be, the king went to her at his usual hour, and did what he had designed; even if she were in bed, and perspiring heavily with fever. The king, who, as has been said, liked the fresh air, and who shunned the heat of a room, expressed surprise on arriving to find everything closed, and had the windows open, not relenting though he saw her in this condition, and that up to ten o'clock, when he went away to supper, and without considering the coolness of the night. If there was to be music, fever or headache made no difference; and a hundred lamps in the eyes. Thus the king always took his own course, without ever asking her if she were not troubled by it.”

This is history of the most painful character, but it is also most truthful. Saint-Simon tells us more of Louis XIV. and his court than half-a-dozen of his contemporaries put together.

Another court-chronicler was Philippe de Courcillon, Marquis de Dangeau,<sup>1</sup> a descendant, through his mother, of

<sup>1</sup> 1638-1720.

Duplessis-Mornay, of an old Huguenot family, but too good a courtier to remain a Protestant long. He became early in life a Roman Catholic, served under Turenne and in Flanders, was aide-de-camp of the king, and entrusted with several diplomatic missions. He was a favourite of Louis and the royal family. The Marquis wrote a *Journal*, which contains everything that was done at court from 1684 until 1720, and gives a very minute though faithful picture of the life and doings of the *Grand Monarque* and his family. It is a mere diary, rather monotonous, and possessing neither the causticity nor the interest of Saint-Simon.

The memoirs of Charles Perrault<sup>1</sup> end where Saint-Simon begins; he died in the third year of the eighteenth century, and his *Illustrious Men of the Age of Louis XIV.* deals only with those who had earned notoriety before Saint-Simon attained his majority. A Parliamentary advocate, a client of Colbert's, and comptroller-general of royal buildings, he had many opportunities of mixing with and studying the manners of the men of the day. He was a scholar as well as a writer of memoirs, and his *Parallel between the Ancients and the Moderns* is marked by much discrimination, although it drew down upon him a crushing reply from Boileau. Perrault, however, is best known to fame as the author of *Fairy Tales*, whereof a fellow-countryman<sup>2</sup> has written—"What a lively attraction there is in the smallest details of these charming trifles! What truth in the characters! What ingenious and unexpected originality in the circumlocution! What fresh and striking vigour in the dialogues! Thus I am not afraid to assert that, so long as there remains in our hemisphere a people, a tribe, a village, a tent, in which civilisation discovers a refuge against the progressive invasions of barbarism,

<sup>1</sup> 1628-1703.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Nodder.



there will be related, by the light of the solitary hearth, the adventurous Odyssey of *Tom Thumb*, the conjugal revenge of *Blue Beard*, the clever manœuvres of *Puss in Boots*; and the Ulysses, the Othello, the Figaro of the children will survive as long as the others."

## CHAPTER VI.

## § 1. LITERATURE OF THE REFUGEES.

"How far Louis XIV. carried his zeal for the church—that virtue of sovereigns who have received power and the sword only that they may be props of the altar and defenders of its doctrine! Specious reasons of state! in vain did you oppose to Louis the timid views of human wisdom, the body of the realm enfeebled by the flight of so many citizens, the progress of trade checked, either by the deprivation of their industry or by the furtive removal of their wealth! Dangers fortify his zeal. The work of God fears not man. He believes that he strengthens his throne by overthrowing that of error. The profane temples are destroyed, the pulpits of seduction are cast down. The prophets of falsehood are torn from their flocks. At the first blow dealt to it by Louis, heresy falls, disappears, and is reduced either to hide itself in the obscurity whence it issued, or to cross the seas, and to take with it into foreign hands its false gods, its bitterness, and its rage."<sup>1</sup>

It was one of the harshest, least just, and perhaps we may add the most ironical things that Massillon has written; and it may at all events be supplemented by the natural remark that, whatever else the fugitive Huguenots carried with them from France, during the persecution which followed upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, they carried their patience, their courage, their handicraft, and mental gifts, enriching the

<sup>1</sup> Massillon, *Funeal Oration on Louis XIII.*

countries to which they fled as much as they impoverished the land from which they were driven. As to the number of these exiles accounts have greatly varied ; but it is not unsafe to rely upon the computation of a Roman Catholic writer, who estimates the number at 230,000.<sup>1</sup> Massillon is so far right that Louis did what he had undertaken to do thoroughly. Writing to the Cardinal de Noailles in the midst of the *dragonnades*, Madame de Maintenon says : “ The soldiers are killing numbers of the fanatics ; they hope soon to rid Languedoc of them.” Madame de Sévigné, writing to a friend from Brittany, and ridiculing the notion that she was dull, exclaims : “ No, we are not so dull. Hanging is my recreation. They have just taken four-and-twenty or thirty of these men, and are going to throw them off.” If a joke, a very ghastly one. And again, writing to Bussy-Rabutin, she says : “ You have doubtless seen the edict by which the king revokes that of Nantes. There is nothing so fine as what it contains, and never has any king done, or will do, a more memorable deed.” Whereto her cousin replies : “ I vastly admire the conduct of the king in destroying the Huguenots. The wars which have been carried on against them, and the St. Bartholomew, had given some reputation to the sect. His Majesty has gradually undermined it ; and the edict he has just issued, supported by the dragoons and by Bourdaloue, will soon give them the *coup de grâce*.” On another occasion Madame de Sévigné writes to the same correspondent, relating a dreadfully fatiguing journey which her son-in-law, M. de Grignan, had made in Dauphiné, “ to pursue and punish the miserable Huguenots, who issued from their holes, and vanished like ghosts to avoid extermination.” Mademoiselle de Scudéry writes : “ The king has worked great miracles against the Huguenots ; and the authority which he has employed to unite

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Smiles, in his *Huguenots in France*, has brought together a large consensus of contemporary opinion upon this subject.

them to the church will be most salutary to themselves and to their children, who will be educated in the purity of the faith." In the Academy, the Abbé Tallemant des Réaux, who himself had been a Huguenot, referring to the destruction of a Protestant place of worship by the mob of Charenton, exclaimed: "Happy ruins, the finest trophy France ever beheld!" Thomas Corneille eulogised Louis for "throttling the Reformation." Fontenelle won a prize given by the Academy for a poem on the Revocation. La Fontaine, La Bruyère, Quinault, Madame Deshoulières, the tender singer of Seine pastorals, and many others of undoubted piety and sense, in addition to the great ecclesiastics already cited, praised the persecution of the Protestants, and rejoiced at what only a few Catholics perceived to be a notable disaster for France.

The refugees fled to England, to Holland, to Switzerland, to Germany: ministers, professors, scholars, gentlemen of refined education and taste, as well as artizans and labourers who were able to secure the means of escape. "Men of commerce and industry betook themselves to England, Germany, and above all Prussia, which held out attractions for them; men of war, sailors for the most part, to England and the United Provinces; theologians or ardent believers, whom Switzerland could not receive, and whom the prudent policy of the Cantons did not permit them to retain, took their way to Holland, whither the nobility, with the lettered portion of the *émigrés*, rapidly crowded."<sup>1</sup> There were many reasons why the most cultivated of the refugees preferred Holland as their country of exile. They found there a certain robust political freedom, a greater liberty of the press, and even a more intimate familiarity with their own language than in England or Germany. Writing in 1684, Bayle says: "The French lan-

<sup>1</sup> M. Sayous, *Histoire de la littérature française à l'Etranger*, vol. i, p. 220, to whom I am under great obligations for this and the following chapters.



guage is so well known in this country that French books have greater circulation than any others. There are hardly any men of letters who do not understand French, even if they cannot speak it. Latin is not so well known, which is the reason why M. Jurieu now delivers all his lectures in French, that he may have for hearers even those who do not understand Latin.”<sup>1</sup>

## § 2. BAYLE, HIS FRIENDS AND OPPONENTS.

Pierre Bayle<sup>2</sup> and Pierre Jurieu<sup>3</sup> were amongst the first of the religious *émigrés* who settled in Holland, having together sought a refuge in Rotterdam, upon the enforced closing of the Academy at Sedan,<sup>4</sup> in 1681. This Academy was one of the four principal Protestant seminaries of learning in France; its professors—Bayle, Jurieu, Abbadie, Basnage, and others—all expatriated by the same oppressive decree, were amongst the soundest scholars and acutest critics of their age.

Jurieu, son of a Protestant clergyman of Blois, and of the daughter of Pierre Dumoulin, had studied theology both in Holland and England; and his reputation was such that he received, whilst yet young, numerous invitations from churches and academies in his native country to accept office. He chose to fill the chair of theology and Hebrew at Sedan, and devoted himself at once to his students and the labours of his pastoral charge. Not without ambition of a still higher order, he aimed at being the Bossuet of the Protestant

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelles Lettres de Bayle*, vol. ii. p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1647-1706.

<sup>3</sup> 1637-1713.

<sup>4</sup> The town itself, the Lille of the seventeenth century, with upwards of a hundred manufactories of iron, steel, and broadcloth, was completely ruined by the dispersion of the Protestants. The destiny of France had in store for it a more enduring, though a very different kind of notoriety!

Church ; and indeed, by his oratorical power, his energy, and personal influence, he affords a tolerably close parallel with Bossuet, in all except the possession of worldly fortune and repute. He was one of the staunchest opponents of those who sought to bring about a pacific reunion of the two Churches, and wrote, with great controversial force and no little elegance, a number of polemical works which entitle him to considerable literary fame.<sup>1</sup> In Holland he continued to write, with ever-increasing force and even violence. In his exile he became imbued with mysticism ; and his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, printed in 1686, and circulated secretly in France, wherein he announced the speedy deliverance of the Protestant Church, and the destruction of the Papist Babylon, incited an outbreak of fanaticism in the Cevennes, which was attended by a great amount of bloodshed. In 1688 and the following year he caused to be issued at Rotterdam the *Sighs of Enslaved France, aspiring to be Free*—a famous series of pamphlets attributed to Levassor, an Oratorian who had become a Protestant. M. Henri Martin<sup>2</sup> says of these pamphlets that they are “a singular medley of liberal aspirations and retrograde tendencies towards an imperfectly appreciated

<sup>1</sup> In 1675 he published an *Apology for the Morals of the Reformers, or a Defence of their Doctrine touching Justification, the Perseverance of the true Saints, and the Certitude that each Believer ought to have and must have of his Salvation*. This last work was a reply to Arnauld's *Overturning of the Morality of Jesus by the Doctrine of the Calvinists touching Justification*—a somewhat unjust and ungenerous attack by the Jansenist doctor on the morals of the Reformation. Five years later he wrote his *Preservative against Chance of Religion, or a just and true Representation of the Roman Catholic Religion, as opposed to the flattering Portraits which have been drawn of it, and especially to that of M. de Condom*. This he followed up in the succeeding year by his *Policy of the Clergy of France, or Curious Discussions between two Roman Catholics, the one a Parisian and the other a Provincial, on the Means employed in these days to destroy the Protestant Religion in this Kingdom*. The last work especially produced a great effect upon the authorities of the Church and the Government, and contributed more than anything else to the suppression of the Academy at Sedan.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. p. 162.

past, and are especially characterised by that hatred of modern political and administrative unity which Boulainvilliers and Saint-Simon were about to express with so much energy. To read them with moderate attention is enough to show that they cannot be Jurieu's own, except perhaps the last three or four of the fifteen. Jurieu would never have expressed himself on the Roman Church as is done in these pages, still all but Catholic ; and the political and rationalistic spirit of these writings has nothing of his mystic and apocalyptic audacity."<sup>1</sup> Nothing, in fact, came amiss to Jurieu by which he could count on wounding the Roman Church. The close of his life was disturbed by his quarrel with Bayle, who, inclining to free thought in religious matters, declared boldly against theological constraint. Jurieu, whilst opposed to the tolerant principles of his former friend, was in political theory a champion of the sovereignty of the people, and Bayle attacked him both on this ground and on the ground of his uncompromising Calvinism, almost wholly breaking away from the religious traditions of his youth.

Bayle was, like Jurieu, the son of a Protestant pastor, and his education, neglected at first, was afterwards pursued with intense eagerness, but with too little system to produce an exact scholar or a thoroughly well-regulated mind. At the age of twenty-three he abjured the Protestantism in which he had been brought up, only to return to it a year or two later. His father sent him to Geneva that he might prepare to enter his own calling ; but the restless mind of the future critic and philosopher revolted against the constraints of theological study ; he became tutor in several families in succession, and whilst in Switzerland made many friends ; Basnage, Louis Tronchin, and Constant amongst them. His letters, still extant, prove at once the activity of his mind

<sup>1</sup> The Protestant French historian, Michel Nicolas, maintains, however, that they are written by Jurieu.

and the philosophic predilections which he entertained at that period of his career. The style which, ripened and compressed, appeared years afterwards in his *Dictionary*, is already manifest in these fresh, quaint, and discursive letters, the letters of a bookworm and a hoarder of literary odds and ends, and still the letters of a philosopher. Writing on one occasion to his elder brother, who had come into a small property, he says :

“ I had wished with a very sincere heart that it had been more considerable. Such as it is, may God vouchsafe to let you long and peaceably enjoy it. Martial, enumerating the things necessary to a happy life, sets first of all property accruing by heritage, and not acquired by severe labours, absence of legal strife, and domestic arrangements not liable to interruption : *res non parata labore sed relictâ, focus perennis, lis nunquam*. With the first item I wish you may have all the rest ; and as for the offers you so generously make me, believe me, my dear brother, that they are superfluous. Knowing as I do your candour, your affection and disinterestedness, I believed that what was yours was mine ; and believe that I would do the same for you if I had any good fortune.”<sup>1</sup>

Returning to France after a few years, Bayle taught successively at Rouen and at Paris, until Basnage, who had accepted a chair at Sedan, procured for his friend an invitation to the professorship of philosophy in the Academy of that town. It must be confessed that Bayle was a little out of place in that professorship. He was a philosopher rather negatively than positively and scholastically, as he confesses himself : “ I am a peripatetic in everything except as regards physics, wherein I am entirely against Aristotle or Descartes.” Nor was he even consistent, either in his present profession or by natural bent of mind. A young Jesuit had sought to prove—perhaps no very difficult task

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelles Lettres*, vol. i. p. 120.



—that Malebranche, like his master Descartes, exhibited a tendency unfavourable to Roman Catholicism, and rather in conformity with the Calvinistic doctrine. Bayle went out of his way to defend Descartes against what, at least in his eyes, should not have been a very serious accusation. It was at Sedan that Bayle's friendship for Jurieu was commenced and cultivated; although it is evident from his voluminous correspondence that he numbered amongst his acquaintance several of the prominent Romanists of the literary world.

His first work of importance was a volume of *Thoughts concerning the Comet*, published in Rotterdam soon after taking up his residence there. It was suggested by the great comet of 1680, which had been the subject of considerable discussion amongst scientific men, and of no little consternation on the part of the public. The first sketch of the work was in the form of a letter to the Paris *Mercur*e, the publication of which had been forbidden by the lieutenant of police, from whom an authorisation would have been necessary. In 1682 he addressed this letter, developed and enlarged, to a doctor of the Sorbonne, and succeeding editions bear the title of *Various Thoughts, written to a Doctor of the Sorbonne on the occasion of the Comet which appeared in the month of December 1680*. The plan of this singular work is somewhat quaint. If, argues the author, comets have anything to do with future worldly events, it must be either as causes or as signs—to produce, or to announce them beforehand. The first supposition is at once a heresy and an absurdity. To accept them as signs of the Divine will would be altogether contrary to the spirit of revelation; and directly opposed to scientific truth, since they are manifestly a part of the solar system; whereas to believe them to be indications of coming calamities would be to think that God would encourage idolatry in the human race, which is an

impiety. It may, however, be argued that God would permit these indications of coming events in order to prevent men from falling into atheism: whereto Bayle replies—that this would be to have recourse to one evil in order to prevent another, and, as he maintains, a greater evil to prevent a less. This, in fact, is the point to which the author desired to draw his readers—the comparison between idolatry and atheism, wherein the latter gains the full advantage. These *Thoughts* are, in short, an apology for atheism; although in another sense they serve chiefly as a thread whereon the author strings a thousand facts, illustrations, and curious sallies of irony and wit. Bayle makes in his *Thoughts* a remarkable observation. “How do we know,” he says, “if at the present moment there is not some gentleman, still learning at school, who is destined to become the scourge of France before twenty years have passed.” This was written in 1682; and Marlborough, precisely twenty years later, and Eugène of Savoy a few years after the specified time, verified the saying of the acute Bayle.

The *General Criticism of the History of Calvinism*, written in the course of a fortnight, was a rejoinder to Maimbourg’s *History of Calvinism*, wherein the Jesuit had expended a great deal of satire upon the reformed religion, but which drew down upon himself a castigation from the master-critic. Bayle’s work was condemned to be publicly burned by the executioner; but it raised his reputation throughout France, and made him the centre of many hopes amongst the more liberal-minded of his fellow countrymen. A more important labour now began to occupy the time of the exile; for in March 1684 he brought out the first number of *Tidings from the Republic of Letters*, printed in Amsterdam, somewhat upon the plan of the *Journal des Savants*, which de Salle had commenced in Paris in the year 1665. Each number consisted of extracts and literary judgments, arranged with con-

siderable taste for what was virtually a first attempt, and which is of inestimable value for the history of contemporary European literature. The new periodical was received with much satisfaction by the reading public in France and elsewhere. It was an age of vast literary activity, and that rather critical and retrospective than original. The quarrel of "the Ancients and the Moderns" was at its height; questions of philosophy and of taste were discussed with infinite zest and warmth. Bayle stood beyond the circle of the principal combatants—or rather he combated them all from his own independent ground; Arnauld, Bossuet, Malebranche, the Jesuits, Fontenelle, Madame Dacier, Jurieu himself, were amongst the writers with whom he delighted to measure his strength. The English Royal Society invited him to maintain a correspondence with them, at the same time referring to "the superior tact and high talent of M. Bayle for philosophy." The friends of freedom in every land, in France especially, read the *Tidings* with eagerness; and now and again Bayle would receive a contribution from a Frenchman, who, still clinging to his native country, dare not or could not acknowledge all that he thought. One such came from Fontenelle, an allegory purporting to describe, in a letter from Batavia, a civil war in the island of Borneo, between two pretenders with the transparent names of Mreo and Enègue.<sup>1</sup> Bayle was on this occasion an indiscreet editor, and revealed the authorship of the letter; so that, as Voltaire informs us, Fontenelle was obliged to rescue himself on the road to the Bastille by a copy of verses in praise of the extirpation of heresy.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes struck hard beyond the boundaries of France. The same persecution which filled Holland with refugees, which drained the life-blood

<sup>1</sup> "Rome" and "Genève." The *Relation de l'île de Bornéo* appeared in the number for January 1686.

from the unhappy land, preparing the way gradually and surely for the inundation of indifferentism and immorality whereby France was presently overwhelmed, which drove into England many of its best and noblest children,<sup>1</sup> made itself bitterly felt by many of those who, like Bayle, had not waited to be expatriated by force. The exile's father died soon after the revocation; his elder brother succumbed to the rigour of a close confinement. Bayle solaced the bitterness of his heart by writing a pamphlet full of indignation and solemn warnings, under the title, "*What France wholly Catholic under Louis the Great really is; and he followed it up by another: A philosophical Commentary on the saying of Jesus Christ—'Compel them to come in,' wherein is proved by various demonstrative arguments that there is nothing more abominable than to make conversions by force, and wherein are refuted all the sophisms of forcible converters, as well as the apology for persecutions made by Saint Augustine; translated from the English of Mr. Briggs, by M. J. F. Canterbury, 1686.*"<sup>2</sup> The line of argument may be judged from a brief extract:—

"It is here that our adversaries imagine they have us by the throat. It follows from your reasoning, they say, that you must endure in the commonwealth, not only Socinians, but Jews and Turks also; now this consequence is absurd: therefore the doctrine from which it springs is so likewise. I reply that I admit the consequence; but I deny that it is absurd. There are occasions in which moderate sentiments are best, and the two extremes vicious; which indeed is very general. But in this case it would be impossible to discover the true medium; we must have all or nothing; we cannot have good reasons for tolerating one sect if they are not good for tolerating another. It is a similar case to that in the Caudine Forks, where

<sup>1</sup> Amongst others the ancestors of Richard Chenevix Trench and Harriet Martineau.

<sup>2</sup> This pamphlet is of course no translation, and was published by Wolfgang, at Amsterdam.



Herennius Pontius counselled one or other of two extremes, either to treat all the Romans well, or to slay them all; and experience showed that his son, who would have observed a middle course, lacked understanding."

The *Philosophical Commentary* made a great stir, and its Socinianism displeased Jurieu and others of the Protestants as much as the authorities of the Orthodox Church. Bayle did his best to divert suspicion of the authorship from himself; the more so when Jurieu declared it to have been written by a cabal inimical to the Protestants, for the purpose of bringing them into odium. Bayle's position was in fact a very difficult one; for the more he inclined to a pronounced scepticism, the more he found himself isolated from the great majority of his friends. The lamentable quarrels which sadden the annals of the refugees in Holland date for the most part from the publication of this *Commentary*. The most famous of the learned exiles were at this time assembled in the Low Countries. Besides Bayle and Jurieu, Rotterdam possessed Basnage, Dubosc, and de Superville; Claude, Jaquelot, and La Placette were at the Hague; Le Clerc was at Amsterdam. Of those who clung most jealously to the reformed faith, Jurieu was generally regarded as the mouthpiece and the champion; and he deemed it his duty to protest vigorously against the excessive liberty of thought and expression claimed by Bayle. Bossuet did not fail to sting the ultra-Protestant champion by deducing from Bayle's opinions a general condemnation of the Protestants. "The glory of Christianity," he wrote, "is delivered over to the Socinians. The disease has risen to the head." Jurieu writhed under the reproach; and he began to write no less bitterly against his old friend than against his open enemy. He wrote a reply to the *Commentary*, called: *On the rights of the two Sovereigns in matters of Religion—the Conscience and the Prince*. The dispute was checked for a time by the

failing health of both ; and Bayle, obliged to cut down his literary labours to the lowest point, resigned his *Tidings from the Republic of Letters* into the hands of de Beauval. The quarrel broke out again, and embittered the closing years of both ; but the two veterans had each a great work in hand, to which the bulk of their time and energy was henceforth given :—Jurieu his *History of Dogmas*, and Bayle his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*.<sup>1</sup>

Bayle was in bad odour with his fellow-refugees during the last twelve years of his life. He had lost his place as professor, and he sought consolation both for this odium and for his poverty in the labour of love which occupied the period between 1694 and 1706, the date of his death. A distinguished literary English critic, who knew Bayle's works well, says of his dictionary, "Bayle, intent on escaping from all beaten tracks . . . opened an eccentric route, where at least he could encounter no parallel . . . In the history of men, in penetrating the motives of their conduct, in clearing up obscure circumstances, in detecting the strong and the weak parts of him whom he was trying, and in the cross-examination of the numerous witnesses he summoned, he assumed at once the judge and the advocate. . . . He collects everything ; if truths, they enter into his history ; if fictions, into discussions ; he places the secret by the side of the public story ; opinion is balanced against opinion : if his arguments grow tedious, a lucky anecdote or an enlivening tale relieves the folio page. . . . Human nature in her shifting scenery, and the human mind in its eccentric directions, open on his view ; so that an unknown person, or a worthless book, are equally objects for his speculation with the most eminent. . . . Bayle is reproached for carrying his speculations too far into the wilds of scepticism—he wrote in distempered

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. ii. "Bayle's Critical Dictionary."

times ; he was witnessing the *dragonnades* and the *révocations* of the Romish Church ; and he lived amidst the Reformed, or the French prophets, as we called them. . . . His scepticism is said to have thrown everything into disorder. Is it a more positive evil to doubt than to dogmatise? . . . Bayle has himself described one of those self-tormenting and many-headed sceptics by a very noble figure, 'He was a hydra who was perpetually tearing himself.' In reality, one can hardly discover what Bayle believed or disbelieved, but to our mind a strong feeling of morality is hidden beneath the vast accumulation of his sceptical remarks and suggestions, all garnered in his search after truth.

Biographical dictionaries were rather the fashion in Europe, and especially in France, when Bayle undertook to write his own. This limited his scope, but it could not limit the fertility of his pen. His subjects seem to have been taken almost at random ; but these once chosen he had nothing to do but to sit down in the midst of his books and write what his pen dictated. Moréri, Chappuzeau, were before him in the general idea ; but it is as difficult to imagine Bayle at a loss for material as it is to imagine him original. "I could not," he says in one of his letters, "meditate on the smallest matter. I never know, when I begin an article, what I shall say in the second sentence." That candidly premised, we know what to expect—nothing ; and we know what we may possibly encounter—everything.

Jacques Basnage,<sup>1</sup> a clergyman, a diplomatist and moralist, of an ancient family, and of about the same order of excellence to which Jurieu belonged as a Protestant pulpit orator, wrote a treatise on *Conscience*, more admired in his own age than read by succeeding ones ; but the greater portion of his time and talent was given to a *History of the*

<sup>1</sup> 1653-1723.

*Jews*, and to a *History of the United Provinces*. Posterity has accorded a greater value to Jean le Clerc's<sup>1</sup> *Bibliothèques*; the careful and laborious notes of a learned bookworm, whose life was passed in omnivorous reading and deliberate reproduction. Such a man ought to live for ever, in order that five centuries of daily work might evolve a shelf-full of commentaries, to serve as a store-house for future generations. Le Clerc was a traveller, who, born at Geneva, visited England, France, and Holland; and in a volume of *Discourses on various questions of Theology* he shows himself an earnest champion of free opinion and expression. His *Life of Richelieu* is severe, even beyond what is just, but for the work of an exiled Protestant upon an absolutist minister of France it is remarkable for its candour and freedom from prejudice.

### § 3. EXILED PROTESTANT PASTORS.

Amongst the preachers of the Reformation who ministered to the church of the refugees, Pierre Dubosc<sup>2</sup> and Jean Claude<sup>3</sup> were conspicuous. Claude, even more than Jurieu, was the Bossuet of the exiled Protestant communion. Unwavering in faith, ready in resource, lofty and influential in his personal character, he was looked up to by his companions as the strength and ornament of their church; and he knew well how to maintain the dignity of the persecuted faith. If Dubosc was less learned, he was not less impressive and dignified. His style of oratory was more simply homiletic, less adorned but more pastoral than the scholarly eloquence of Claude. Of the latter, Bayle, who was in general not very lavish of praise, says,<sup>4</sup> "I do not know if one ever saw

<sup>1</sup> 1657-1736.

<sup>2</sup> 1623-1692.

<sup>3</sup> 1619-1687.

<sup>4</sup> *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, number of November 1687.



more delicacy with more force, more abundance with more choice, more penetration with more justness, more vivacity of mind with more solidity of judgment, an easier phraseology with a more exact method, more elevation in the thoughts and more nobility in the language, more gentle and modest beauties with more grandeur and majesty." It seems to me that if he had possessed elegance he might possibly have rivalled the fame of Bossuet; as it was, his pen fairly supplied the deficiency, and in the controversy in which he was engaged with the orthodox bishop, he does not show to disadvantage. Of his pulpit eloquence we have no better example than the farewell address which he made to his congregation in Paris, whilst the king's *valet de pied* stood by, impatient to execute the monarch's orders, and to see the Protestant pastor beyond the borders of his native country; for while all Huguenot clergymen, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, had to leave France within a fortnight, Claude had the distinguished honour of additional severity, and of being obliged to leave on the very day of the revocation. This is what he says:

"Church of the Lord, once my entire joy, to-day my entire sorrow, weep! The cause is too natural. O, would to God we were at this moment, after the example of the sacrificing king Jehoiada, employed in renewing the alliance between God and his people! Promise to God that you will walk in His ways, that the truth shall be dearer to you than all things, and that you will be faithful to Him unto death, and I will swear on His behalf that He will be still your God! 'Yea!' saith the Eternal, 'I will be their God.' You promise it? Ye heavens, I take ye to witness between this people and their God, so that God shall be always your God; you shall be without pastors, but you shall have for pastor the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom you shall hear by His word. You shall no longer have ministers, but you shall have the Master. You shall no more come to hear our preaching; but you shall attend the sermon of the Son of God,

and receive instructions from His mouth. You shall no more hear our word, but you shall hear the voice of the Lord. You shall no more have temples, but the King dwells not in temples made with hands. With all your hearts, well united in the faith, make unto Him a holy house, which shall be raised to be a tabernacle of God in spirit. Of **your** houses make temples; consecrate them to God by a solemn fast, and there heedfully "render him your services."

His *Complaints of the Protestants cruelly oppressed in the Kingdom of France*,<sup>1</sup> are worth reading even now, to show what means were employed by the *Grand Monarque* to convert his stubborn Huguenot subjects to the Roman Catholic faith, and to remind us what "moral suasion" meant in those days. This small book, in which Claude mentions all the sufferings of the Protestants in France, and says that he puts his trust in the God who delivered his children out of the bondage of Egypt, ends as follows :

"We do not ask for vengeance ; on the contrary, we wish that it may please Him to treat with repentance the hardened hearts of our enemies, and that then He may pardon them. . . . We wish that this little book which contains our complaints may serve as a protestation before heaven and before earth against all the violences which have been done to us in the kingdom of France. . . . We protest against the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, as against a manifest surprise done to the justice of the king, and a visible abuse of the royal authority and power. We protest against all the consequences of this revocation ; against the extinction of our religion in the whole kingdom of France, against the infamies and cruelties practised on dead bodies by refusing them burial, by throwing them in the common sewers, or by dragging them ignominiously on hurdles ; against the taking away of children to have them brought up in the Roman religion ; and against the order given to the parents to have them baptised by priests, and to entrust to them their education. We protest above all against this impious and detestable practice, at the

<sup>1</sup> Nominally published à Cologne, chez Pierre Marteau, 1686 ; really in Holland.

present moment prevalent in France, to make the religion dependent on the will of a mortal and corruptible king, and to treat perseverance in belief as a rebellion and a crime against the State, which is making of a man a god, and which is to authorise atheism or idolatry. We protest against the violent and inhuman detention of our brethren in France, in prisons or otherwise, to prevent them from leaving the kingdom, to go and seek elsewhere the liberty of their conscience."

These words may well bear comparison with the fulsome praises sung by Louis' courtiers and bishops about the royal omnipotence.

Daniel de Superville<sup>1</sup> came to Rotterdam in 1685, a young minister whom the *dragonnades* had driven from Poitou. He had been summoned to Versailles, and every effort was vainly made to induce him to recant; but he preferred expatriation to the most splendid temptations of the court. His reputation as a pulpit orator was above the average; and in this respect he was little, if at all, behind Claude and Dubosc. When William III. of England visited the Hague in 1691, it was de Superville who was chosen to preach before him. It may be, as Bayle maliciously said, that on such occasions as this he did not spare the incense; but at all events we do not find him asking or accepting the rewards which the flattery of an earthly monarch might have earned for him. He preached again in celebration of the peace of Ryswick<sup>2</sup> and the battle of Hochstädt;<sup>3</sup> and he lost no opportunity of contrasting the glory of the Protestant monarch, then in the height of his success, with the feebleness of the king of France, upon whom the Nemesis of his fate was now descending. He does not hesitate in the heartiness with which he has adopted his new country, in the exultation with which he sees the discomfiting of France. He cries to God for vengeance upon the persecutors.

<sup>1</sup> Born in 1657. His grandfather had been physician to Henri IV.

<sup>2</sup> Oct. 30th, 1697.

<sup>3</sup> Aug. 13th, 1704.

"The Daniels in the den, the Jonases in the whale's belly, have long cried unto God ; the faithful, menaced by the plots of Haman, have been cast down for many years ; why should not our great victory be a commencement of the favourable answer vouchsafed to us by God ? Yea, God has already heard us from the palace of his sanctuary."

De Superville was a Cartesian by training, and his sermons of doctrine and commentary are conceived in a strictly philosophical vein ; a fact which has earned for them much consideration amongst the most learned critics and theologians.

The most eloquent of all the Protestant pulpit-orators, as some maintain, the renowned preacher among the exiles, was Jacques Saurin.<sup>1</sup> His life extends far into the eighteenth century, but the fame of his preaching was at its height before the death of Louis XIV., during the last and most disastrous of that monarch's wanton struggles against the liberty and independence of his neighbours. The son of an advocate of Nîmes, born eight years before the revocation, he was expatriated with his family, and lived in Geneva, where he received a liberal education. At the age of fifteen he entered the army, and a year later obtained a commission in a regiment raised for the service of the Duke of Savoy, by M. de Ruvigny, afterwards earl of Galway. Before long, however, the duke withdrew from the league which had been formed against Louis XIV. ; and Saurin returned to Geneva, where he began to study theology. He secured an early reputation for oratory, and shortly after he had been consecrated to the ministry he was invited to, and accepted the charge of, the French Protestant Church in London, being then in his twenty-fourth year. Abbadie heard him preach in the English metropolis, and was so struck by his manner that he exclaimed : "Is it a man or an angel ?" London, however, did not keep

<sup>1</sup> 1677-1730.



him long ; and indeed the climate on this side of the Channel deterred many of the French exiles from settling in a land otherwise so hospitable and tolerant. He had paid a visit to the Hague, on account of his health, and his sermons there gave so much satisfaction that the Dutch insisted on retaining his services, and created for him a special and quaintly-named post as minister to the nobility.<sup>1</sup> He continued to live in Holland for the remainder of his life ; and five volumes of his sermons attest the high quality, the variety, and the practicalness of his style. These are amongst his subjects : *Divine Depths, Alms, The Sufficiency of Revelation, Fitful Devotions, The Torments of Hell, The Misfortunes of Europe, The Cost of the Soul, The Harmony of Religion and Politics, How to study Religion, Love of Country, Holiness, Conversation.* His eloquence was calm, solid, perhaps heavy,—but it was powerful and impressive. If he was rarely a great writer, he was always a great preacher ; if he had not the polish of Bossuet, the sparkling brilliancy of Bourdaloue, the elegance of the orators accustomed to preach before the court in Paris, he had the trenchant vigour most suitable to Protestant homiletics, the pointed vehemence necessary to find its way to the hearts of the downcast exiles who were his usual audience. Hear him on the subject of alms-giving :

“Let each one tax himself. Let none continue in arrears. Let a noble emulation be seen in our midst. Let the great give out of the products of their business, the soldier out of his pay, the merchant out of the fruit of his commerce, the working-man out of the labour of his hands ; let the pastor consecrate a portion of that which his meditations and studies obtain for him ; let the young man give of his pleasures ; let the worldly woman give of her ornaments ; let the sinful woman give of the perfumes destined to profane uses ; let the inhabitant of these Provinces give of his patrimony ; let the refugee give, let him gather up the

<sup>1</sup> “Ministre des Nobles,” a rather odd title in a republic.

fragments of his shattered vessel, and light therewith a fire to pay sacrifice to the God who has saved him from shipwreck. I know not what instinct assures me that this discourse will have more success than those heretofore delivered. Ask boldly, ye who distribute our charities; come into our houses which the Eternal has blessed, and gather alms from a people who will contribute with joy,—who will even give with gratitude."

In Prussia the princess Sophia Charlotte, the mother of Frederick William, the first king of Prussia, showed special favour to the French refugees, being ably seconded by the scholarly diplomatist Spanheim. The House of Brandenburg, which counted such scholars as Leibnitz among its friends and counsellors, emulated Louis XIV. in the eagerness and generosity with which it assembled the most celebrated men of the day, whether Prussians or foreigners, and extended its protection over the cultivators of science and literature.<sup>1</sup> At Berlin it established a French College, at Halle a French Institute, which subsequently ripened into a famous University. At Berlin, too, was founded under royal auspices a French printing-press and library, to which the refugees had free access at all times. Every week Spanheim received some literary friends at his own house, where Abbadie, Lenfant, Beausobre, Chauvin, David Ancillon, and others, were regular attendants. At the residence of Sophia Charlotte, at the castle of Lutzenburg, the exiles were yet more welcome. Jacques Abbadie, invited to Berlin at an early age, was ordained there in 1680, and became minister of the French Protestant Church; the special friendship of the

<sup>1</sup> At Berlin the Court protected other people besides scholars, and there appears to have been very little exclusiveness in the hospitality afforded to the Protestant exiles in Prussia. Charles Ancillon, the son of David, in his *History of the Establishment of the French Refugees in Brandenburg*, says: "A considerable advance has been made to a refugee, on condition that he should support four shops always well provided with *volaille de gibier frais, cuits et rôtis*."

princess was not the only reward of his ability and eloquence. His *Treatise on the Truth of the Christian Religion* extorted even extravagant praise from Roman Catholics. Bussy-Rabutin writes to Madame de Sévigné: "We are now reading it, and we find that there is but this book to read in the world." The hyperbole pleased his correspondent, who rejoined: "It is the most divine of all books; this is the general opinion. I do not believe religion has ever been spoken of as by this man." The enthusiasm was perhaps overdone; but it shows, at all events, that the book was one which suited the times. Bussy-Rabutin says again: "It would not make me quit the world, as it has made Charmel; but it will make me thoroughly despise it." And Madame de Sévigné undertakes to read it once in every three months of her life. This much-lauded work, which, though ingenious and persuasive in its style, is really not the marvel of argument that one might suppose from such overdrawn estimates, was succeeded in a few years by a *Treatise on the Divinity of Jesus Christ*, virtually a continuation of the first. Abbadie's *Art of self-knowledge*, written after its author had come to England in the train of Marshal Schomberg, where he became minister of the Savoy Church, and where he died, is an essay on metaphysics, displaying, it seems to us, more power than the works which had preceded it; though all these productions were on the level of the seventeenth century, and will be read in the nineteenth only to satisfy a literary or a historical curiosity. Much the same thing may be said, in a different degree, of the remains of Lenfant,<sup>1</sup> and Beausobre<sup>2</sup>; who, however, were more distinctly historians than theologians and metaphysicians. The one has left a monument of his laborious enterprise in a *History of the Council of Basle, and of the Council of Constance*: the other in his *History of the Manicheans*; whereof the latter especially

<sup>1</sup> 1661-1728.<sup>2</sup> 1659-1738.

is yet read with satisfaction, and has not been displaced in our libraries by any better or more philosophic treatment of the same phase of ecclesiastical history.

#### § 4. FETTERING OF THE PRESS.

The system of government adopted by Louis XIV. and his counsellors, in so far as a preconcerted and definite system may be said to have existed, was one which undoubtedly entailed great evils upon the nation, and ultimately resulted in the temporary ruin of France; but at the same time it was in many respects successful; it served the purpose of exhibiting to Europe a splendid example of national glory, intellectual supremacy, external order, the highest triumphs of civilisation, all harmoniously existing side by side; it evolved partial prosperity and contentment, at all events for a period, out of an extremity of popular poverty and wretchedness; and if, in the end, it once more reduced the country to the same, or even to worse poverty and wretchedness, it may be maintained that the decline of France at the close of the seventeenth century was due in some measure to causes beyond the control of monarchs and statesmen, which the folly and crimes of these latter might seriously aggravate, but for which they cannot be held altogether responsible. Another king than Louis might have left the country in a far better condition; a less selfish and obstinate ruler might have taxed his subjects less, and have done more to alleviate their sufferings, just as a weaker ruler might have had less influence for evil over the fortunes of the nation. No doubt many of the disasters of France must be attributed to the strong effect produced by the worst personal characteristics of the *Grand Monarque* upon his people; but on the other hand the best characteristics of



Louis had a distinctly beneficial influence, and did for his country what few other absolute monarchs have ever done for theirs. Louis XIV. has often been arraigned at the bar of posterity, and the verdict of history upon his reign and acts will never be other than unfavourable ; but the literary historian, at any rate, can afford to do him justice. His faults are too many to suffer his virtues to be forgotten. The great mistake of his foreign policy was to suppose that he alone could stem the tide of religious independence in Europe, in face of the determined opposition offered to his assumptions by Prussia, Switzerland, Savoy, the German States, the Low Countries, and England ; but it was a fault based upon a clear and intelligible idea, which he doubtless entertained in all sincerity, and with a belief in the righteousness of his cause. The great fault of his home policy was to suppose that he could crush heresy, free thought, revolt of ideas and action, without a fatal suppression of natural forces which must eventually break forth and overwhelm either himself or his successors. He did in fact stifle all divergence of opinion in France, or at all events the free expression thereof ;—with what consequences the remainder of our literary survey must show.

The method and manner of this suppression are amongst the most interesting topics of the political history of the epoch ; let us arrest ourselves for a moment in order to inquire in what way the literature of the same epoch resisted and rebelled against the effort to thwart its wider development. Let us, in other words, appreciate the extent to which the bolder spirits of the declining age of Louis XIV. contrived to make themselves heard and felt amongst their contemporaries, resorting either to anonymity, to a clandestine press, or to the hazardous devices of pamphleteering. Anonymity was, of course, far less of an exception in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than it has since become ; but it

was, after all, not very serviceable to those who wished to make their writings public in the face of an active censorship, strong penal laws, and a police so effective and industrious as that of Louis XIV. In order that a book or pamphlet might be published, the permission of the chancellor had first to be obtained; and those who wrote, printed, published, or distributed any work attacking religion or the government were put to death. Amongst the duties of the lieutenant-general of police, setting aside the maintenance of public order in the streets, none was more important, or required greater tact in its exercise, than the repression of pamphlets and publications of any kind which might be obnoxious to the Court, the authorities, the Church, or the University. When La Reynie was appointed to that office, in 1667, he found that his responsibility exacted all the vigilance and delicacy of which he was capable. The Fronde had been suppressed, and with it had for a time disappeared the inundation of aggressive tracts and brochures which it had called forth; but the same spirit which created the Fronde was still active in France—was indeed destined to remain in activity for many generations to come, and laws of greater or less severity were continually being passed in restriction of the freedom of the press. At the same time that Milton was making his noble protest in behalf of an unfettered utterance of opinion, France was—partly, no doubt, from the absolute necessity of her situation—strenuously multiplying her provisions against it. In 1666 a decree was passed, evidently in accumulation of the previously existing enactments, and with a view to additional stringency, authorising “the ordinary officers to judge without appeal all those who wrote newsletters or newspapers.” In June 1667 we find La Reynie writing to the chancellor: “I have drawn up the project of a decree of council in the matter of printing and bookselling, which I thought necessary to propose to you for the reasons set

down in the margin. I will send the same to M. Colbert, so that, if he has any special notion, I may report to you thereon." The same letter records that the lieutenant-general had just seized a tract of eight pages, printed at Brussels.<sup>1</sup> That decree was passed for a year only, and perhaps as an experiment ; in 1670 La Reynie urged Colbert to re-enact it, and to give instructions to the procureur-général Talon "to repress by the most rigorous means the licence whereby libels were spread over the country, and in foreign lands ;" and indeed Colbert had always acted with as much severity as lay in his power, against not only the printers and publishers, but also the mere writers of libels and satires, even when not intended for publication. Of course he had no lack of private informations against such writers, supplied from motives as various as those which usually inspire the conduct of informers. In 1683 Louis authorised La Reynie to proceed against "several ecclesiastics and booksellers who were concerned in the composition of various defamatory writings and libels, containing maxims contrary to the well-being of the administration, and the quiet of the King's subjects, and attacking the honour of divers persons occupying positions of dignity." Two of the persons here referred to, one of them being almoner of the Hôtel-Dieu, were condemned to the galleys. Another of the accused was Lenoble, author of the *Labours of Hercules* ; of whose punishment, if any, the records do not speak. In 1686 a new edict was published whereby the number of booksellers was limited to twenty-four, and seventy-nine royal *censeurs* were appointed ; of whom ten were for theology, eleven for jurisprudence, twelve for medical and physical sciences, eight for mathematics, thirty-six for history and literature, and two for the fine arts. But as the censors did not prevent the spread of obnoxious books, worse penalties were inflicted under the rule of La Reynie. In

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Clément, *La Police sous Louis XIV.*, p. 72 *et seq.*

1694 appeared a pamphlet, *The Apparition of Scarron to Madame de Maintenon, and the Reproaches which he cast upon her concerning her amours*. At the end of the same year a certain Chavance was tortured on the rack by the lieutenant-general, and, after accusing some monks of instigating his work, was condemned to be hanged. A printer and a book-binder were also put to the ordinary and extraordinary torture, and hanged, for having printed, bound, and sold libels against the king, amongst others the *Apparition*. Two accused were sent to the galleys. A fifth, after having been tortured, was going to be hanged, when his execution was put off, because he was said to be a distant relative of the king's confessor La Chaise. All these severities, however, did not prevent the appearance of pamphlets from time to time, more or less grievously offending the monarch and his court; some of which were printed secretly in France, under various devices, for the purpose of concealment and avoidance of punishments and penalties, whilst others were printed in foreign countries, in Holland especially, and privately introduced into France.<sup>1</sup> From 1660 to 1750, eight hundred and sixty-nine authors, printers, booksellers, vendors of engravings and prints, were thrown into the Bastille, as having published works contrary to morals, religion, or the king. They generally belonged to the latter category. But all this was bootless. In vain the police became more lynx-eyed; in vain the number of

<sup>1</sup> We give the titles of a few of these pamphlets: *Le Nouveau Turc des chrétiens*; *L'Alcoran de Louis XIV.*; *Les Soupirs de la France esclave*; *Les Héros de la France sortant de la barque à Caron à l'Esprit de Luxembourg*; *Luxembourg apparut à Louis XIV.*; *La Confession réciproque, dialogue entre Louis XIV. et le P. de la Chaise*; *Pensées Morales de Louis XIV.*; *Le Marquis de Louvois sur la sellette*; *Julien l'apostat*; *L'Art d'assassiner les Rois enseigné par les Jésuites*; *Le partage du Lion de la fable, vérifié par le roi*; and *Moyen de réduire la France à un état plus chrétien*. With the exception of the first pamphlet, which appeared in 1683, all were published between 1689 and 1700. The *Caractères* and *Nouveaux caractères de la famille royale*, brought out in 1702 and 1703, and the *Entretien entre Louis XIV. et la Marquise de Maintenon*, published in 1710, are more bitter and scurrilous than the earlier pamphlets.



informers increased, death-warrants and condemnations to the galleys multiplied. Louis would not learn the lesson that it is impossible to gag the irrepressible ; and his successors paid dearly for the experience that the feelings of a nation will vent themselves in writing or in action, and that the latter is perhaps the more dangerous.

END OF VOL. II.

III.

FROM THE END OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV.  
TILL THE END OF THE REIGN OF  
LOUIS PHILIPPE.



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## BOOK VI.

### THE FORERUNNERS OF THE REVOLUTION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. THE TRANSITION AUTHORS.

THE reaction which, as we have already seen, overspread France after the death of Louis XIV., which altered the whole aspect of her literary and social annals, and which, after more than half a century of gradual intensification and accumulation of force, brought to birth the cataclysm of the Revolution, was of course not entirely due to the influences of the *Grand Monarque*, nor even to the absolutist principles of Richelieu and his successors. These, no doubt, had done much to aggravate the evils which afflicted France during the seventeenth century, and to stimulate the causes which brought about the social revolt of the eighteenth century. Louis and his ministers between them had ruined the country. They exhausted the sap of life by which alone a country can exist wholesomely, and develope healthfully ; and the glory and grandeur of the Augustan age had virtually involved the misery and degradation of the age of Terror. An absolute king, a sumptuous court, and an extravagant administration had only one possible counterpart in an oppressed and exhausted populace ; it was an inexorable law of history that this should be the case, but it was a law which the philosophy of history alone would reveal, and this philosophy



had not been mastered by those who were responsible for its violation. In England, experience had been more carefully read, and instinct led men to sounder and more prudent conclusions. Allowing for differences of circumstance and temperature, Charles the First and his sons might have wrought in England much the same evils that Louis XIV. and his great-grandson wrought in France, had not their career been sternly arrested by the phlegmatic independence of their subjects. Frenchmen were not so readily brought to the point of executing or banishing their monarchs ; they were long enduring and more easily suppressed ; but the leaven of rebellion was nevertheless at work. Long before the end of Louis XIV.'s reign his people were thoroughly weary of him ; the country, labouring under cruel taxation and ruthless despotism, had ceased to vaunt and extol the magnificence of the court to which the whole nation had been sacrificed ; and the revulsion had made itself more and more manifest, as we have had occasion to see, in the literature of the day. Not alone private memoirs, published generations after the death of the *Grand Monarque*, not alone the clandestine press, or pamphlets given to the world under the protection of foreign nations, but even, here and there, the avowed writings of Frenchmen, made public in Paris itself, had with greater or less directness conveyed a warning of the signs of the times.

The spirit which in the time of Louis XIV. was timidly and furtively expressed, assumed a clearer and bolder form under the Regency, and in the reign of Louis XV. The first note of extravagance and revolt was made perceptible in the domain of morals : religion, philosophy, literary style, were all to sink one by one under the influence of the new emancipation of heart and intellect before the political fabric was attacked. The moral corruption of society sprang directly from the artificial development of manners and taste which characterised the epoch whereof Louis XIV. was the central

figure; and here, as in every great national movement in which the spirit of a nation is mainly engaged, literature plays the part, not only of an historical exponent, but also of a director and of a cause. The morals of the Regency—even of the later court of Louis XIV.—were by their very dissoluteness a protest against the hollow formalism of court-etiquette, the coercive narrowness of the orthodox religion, the irresponsible tyranny of personal authority. It was the first rank growth of rebellion, the first rude assertion of liberty to think and to act, on the part of men who could not assimilate the conventional hypocrisy which was imposed upon them. The abbé de Chaulieu<sup>1</sup> is an apt instance of this moral recrudescence in its literary development. He caught the spirit of it, possibly enough, from Molière's friend Chapelle, and he became the Gaul *marquois* of Parisian society, even in the most polished epoch of the Augustan age, even in the most conventionally correct decades of the seventeenth century. Belonging to the school of Marot,<sup>2</sup> holding both the religion of others and his own philosophy lightly, attracted by the glare and glitter of sensuous enjoyment, he was yet an Epicurean rather by taste and coquetry than in act and practical devotion; not himself immoral so much as the cause and the apologist of the excess of others. His intimate friend, the marquis de la Fare,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1659-1726.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Rousseau apostrophises him thus:—

“ Maître Vincent, ce grand faiseur de lettres,  
Si bien que vous n'eût su prosaiser ;  
Maître Clément, ce grand faiseur de mètres,  
Si doncement n'eût su poétiser ;  
Pâleux alone va se désoluer  
De son amour pour la doute fintaïne,  
Et contredire que pour biens vers païser  
Vinchamperois vaut mieux qu'eau d'Hippocrène.”

Maître Vincent is Volture : Maître Clément is Clément Marot. — *Œuvres de J. B. Rousseau*. Paris, 1820, vol. ii. p. 263.

<sup>3</sup> 1644-1712.

author of a meritorious volume of *Memoirs*, which show that he had the instinct of a genuine historian, unresistingly passed the boundary line which Chaulieu had marked out, and did not hesitate to vaunt himself "*de grege Epicuri*." The abbé condemned and lamented the extravagance of the marquis; but in principle and in spirit they were worshippers at the same shrine. Both contrived to escape public scandal—more fortunate in this respect than Bussy-Rabutin and Saint-Evremond. They lived and died in Paris, if not in the odour of conventional propriety, at least without the open stigma of revolt against the accepted social code; but they were none the less pioneers of freedom in thought and literary expression.

Of these pioneers of the new age Jean-Baptiste Rousseau<sup>1</sup> was another, with still better claim to our attention than Chaulieu and La Fare. His name, if not his individuality, connects the epoch of Louis XIV. with the epoch of the Revolution; for Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the author of *Emile* and the *Contrat Social*, who displayed the spirit of his namesake in another form, was one of the principal apostles, though not absolutely a participator, of the great popular upheaval which brought the last century to a close. Jean-Baptiste Rousseau was a poet, with the gifts of harmony and satire, a lyric poet in an essentially prosaic age, without much genius or originality, or even feeling, but with an instinct which made his verses eminently suggestive, and a shrewdness of perception which gave his satire considerable effect. Reckless both in his life and in his writings, and destitute of the prudence which enabled many another roysterer of his time to steer clear of public scandal, he too easily fell a victim to the enemies whom his bitter epigrams had made for him. One of these was La Motte, who had conceived the notable idea of compressing *The Iliad* into twelve books; although his knowledge

<sup>1</sup> 1670-1741.

of Greek was at most not greater than that of Pope. Rousseau covered the abortive work with ridicule,<sup>1</sup> and La Motte never forgave him. After the bad success of Rousseau's play *The Capricious Man*, several bitter couplets were circulated against the literary habitués of a certain coffee-house kept by the widow Laurent. These attacks, gradually increasing in venom, were often repeated, and, after the election of La Motte to the vacant seat of Boileau at the Academy, reached such a climax that Rousseau, who was accused of having written them, received a public castigation. The poet disclaimed them; but in vain. He had written plenty of others quite as bad; but it was the spurious ones for which he was destined to suffer. His supposed discovery of the real author of the couplets in the Swiss Saurin, pressed with too much indiscretion, completely discomfited him in the eyes of the Parisian public, whilst he was condemned by a court of justice to pay four thousand francs damages. He fled from France, refused several times to return, unless his innocence were recognised, and died, thirty years later, in exile at Brussels.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever may be thought of the morality of Jean-

<sup>1</sup> "Le traducteur qui rima l'Iliade  
De douze chants prétendit l'abrégé;  
Mais par son style aussi triste que fade  
De douze en sus il a su l'allonger.  
Or le lecteur, qui se sent affliger,  
Le donne au diable; et dit, perdant haleine:  
'Eh, finissez, rimeurs à la douzaine!  
Vos abrégés sont longs au dernier point.'  
Ami lecteur, vous voilà bien en peine,  
Rendons-les courts en ne les lisant point.'

\* Piron wrote the following epitaph on him:—

"Ci-git l' illustre et malheureux Rousseau:  
La Brabant fut sa tombe et Paris son berceau.  
Voici l'abrégé de sa vie,  
Qui fut trop longue de moitié:  
Il fut trente ans digne d'envie,  
Et trente ans digne de pitié."



Baptiste Rousseau, and in spite of his failure as a dramatist, the poet's taste, in the art of versification particularly, is not to be disputed. Human sympathy, on the other hand, has a good deal to do with the development of the poetic faculty ; and of this Rousseau had but little. The consequence is, that whilst he was a harmonious and even a polished poet, inclining by preference to moral subjects, writing sacred odes and songs, crowded with the maxims of a dignified moral philosophy, he composed also obscene epigrams and filthy verses, to please the grand prior de Vendôme, and the literary libertines who met at the Temple, and acted the part of Petronius Arbiter at the same time that he was imitating the Psalms of King David at court. His countrymen have fought over his merits, alternately extolling and depreciating them ; but his praises have apparently been most frequently sung by critics to whom another and a greater Rousseau was obnoxious, whilst others, and perhaps the majority of literary judges, following the example of Voltaire, have failed to see in Jean-Baptiste Rousseau anything more worthy of esteem than a melodious versifier, dealing for the most part in the commonplaces of humanity.

A couple of poetasters who are wont to be bracketed together for much the same reasons which cause the association of Chaulieu and La Fare—their personal friendship, and the similarity of their spirit and tendency—illustrate yet more clearly the period of transition from Louis XIV. to the Revolution. Preserving much of the mannerism, the narrowness, the timidity of the later Augustan age, Fontenelle<sup>1</sup> and La Motte<sup>2</sup> have also much of the instinct for liberty which, in the eighteenth century, betrayed its presence under so many different forms of development. If their traditions and powers were all of the past, their ideas and aspirations belonged, in great measure, to the future ; and it was courage,

<sup>1</sup> 1657-1757.

<sup>2</sup> 1672-1731.

not disposition, which retarded their advance. The like thing is true of Chaulieu and La Fare, and of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, though in a less degree ; they dared not embrace the future which tempted them to turn their backs upon the past ; it was a natural shrinking which affected the whole generation, until Voltaire had shown them the example of his courage.

We have seen what Rousseau thought of La Motte ; he was no more tender towards Fontenelle. In one of his epigrams he says—

“ A Norman shepherd for these thirty years  
To men of wit would an example be ;  
He shows them how, with fashionable air,  
To treat great subjects, in familiar style.  
Nor is this all ; for 'mongst the womankind  
He still can shine despite his grizzled beard ;  
No gossip lives in any decent house  
Who's not in raptures with his eloquence.  
And, truth to say, these dames are in the right,  
For he's the daintiest pedant in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Poor Fontenelle was the butt of all the clever men in Paris during the first half-century of his life. “ Whether he speaks or writes,” says La Bruyère,<sup>2</sup> describing him under the name of Cydias,<sup>3</sup> “ he ought not to be suspected of having an eye either to the true, or the false, or the reasonable, or the

<sup>1</sup> “ Depuis trente ans un vieux berger normand,  
Aux beaux esprits s'est donné pour modèle ;  
Il leur enseigne à traiter galamment  
Les grand sujets en style de ruelle.  
Ce n'est le tout : chez l'espace femelle,  
Il brille encor, malgré son poil grison ;  
Et n'est cailllette en honnête maison  
Qui ne se pime à sa douce faconde.  
En vérité, cailllettes ont raison,  
C'est le pédiat le plus joli du monde.”

See vol. ii. bk. v. ch. 4. § 2.    <sup>3</sup> *Caractères de la Société et de la Conversation.*

ridiculous ; he avoids both acting on other people's judgment and being of other people's opinion ; thus, in company, he waits for each one to explain his views of the subject in hand, or the subject which he has himself brought forward, in order to say something entirely new, in a dogmatic style, but, as he thinks, decisive, and incapable of reply. Cydias matches himself with Lucian and Seneca, sets himself above Plato, Virgil, and Theocritus ; and his flatterer (La Motte) takes care to strengthen him every morning in this opinion. United by taste and interest with the despisers of Homer, he waits calmly until the undeceived world shall prefer other poets to him ; he sets himself in this respect above other poets, and knows to whom he assigns the second place. He is, in a word, a compound of the pedant and the *précieux*, made to be admired by the city and the provincials ; in whom, nevertheless, one perceives nothing great except the opinion which he has of himself." It is one of the clearest, the bitterest, and the most damning of literary portraits, which it would be impossible for the fame of Fontenelle to survive. Yet the man himself survived it some fifty years, and became a force and an authority in the intellectual life of his day. His uncles, Pierre and Thomas Corneille, encouraged him to write plays ; and he wrote two, *Aspar* and *Idalie*, which covered him with ridicule. Racine, more merciful than the uncles, laughed at Fontenelle's attempts ; and the latter had little more success with his *Dialogues of the Dead*, and his *Letters of the Chevalier d'Her*. . . . He took next to popularising science, and wrote a volume of *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*, and a *History of Oracles*, wherein he managed to catch the ear of the public. Popular science was thenceforth his rôle · and during the remainder of his life, as a member both of the Academy and of the Academy of Sciences, he enjoyed that species of cheap popularity amongst the minor savants and dilettanti of society which, even in the present day, marks

the highest point of ambition amongst many men of uncertain inspiration, superficial knowledge, and feeble mental grasp. In the *Memoirs* of Madame de Staal,<sup>1</sup> we meet more than once with Fontenelle and La Motte, and the rest of the circle of wits who, at the house of the duchess de Maine, at Sceaux, a less brilliant Hôtel de Rambouillet, used to hold themselves aloof from the dissolute court of the Regent.

From Sceaux, or from the drawing-room of the marchioness de Lambert in Paris, Fontenelle would accompany or go in search of his friend La Motte to the Academy, where, after the death of Boileau, and the exile of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, they reigned supreme. The latter of the two inseparables had written a play, *Lucrèce de Castro*, which was sufficiently good upon the stage to reap a popularity lasting him his lifetime; so that both men rejoiced in their old age in a literary reputation which had been denied to them in their youth.

The stage of the regency had more than the plays of Fontenelle and La Motte to relieve the loftier comedies of Molière and the tragedies of Corneille and Racine. Dancourt<sup>2</sup> had left farces of considerable freshness and piquancy, dealing chiefly with the whimsicalities of peasants and city; Regnard's<sup>3</sup> gay comedies kept their hold upon public favour; Destouches,<sup>4</sup> who had been secretary of the French embassy in London, reached a still higher level in his comedies of character, in which, for that age at least, he attained a place second only to Molière. The *Boaster* (*Le Glorieux*), the *Philosopher Married*, and the *Spendthrift*, display real genius,—not indeed the genius of a powerful comedian, but that of a playwright always ready and able to please, and not seldom rising to the dignity of creative force. In the following apology for avarice, from the last-named play, there is something more than badinage, something stronger than the mere play of words, which, since

<sup>1</sup> 1684-1759.<sup>2</sup> 1661-1725.<sup>3</sup> 1665-1709.<sup>4</sup> 1680-1754.



Molière had taught the trick, it had been comparatively easy to simulate :—

“ The more one’s Avarice, the less one’s vices :  
 The care of hoarding wholly fills the heart,  
 Who lives for this in this his pleasure finds.  
 Beg of a friend, he doubts, or says you *Nay* ;  
 Money’s a friend for ever prompt and true.  
 To hoard’s a pleasure well worth all the rest.  
 If known, we can our every wish command,  
 And have the means, our soul is satisfied. . . .  
 All that I see I have the power to buy,  
 And that’s enough. I like that handsome house. . . .  
 ‘ Nought hinders but I get a better still,’  
 I see a charming woman—Well, I say :  
 ‘ My wealth could buy her,’—and I rest content.  
 In short, all that the world most precious has  
 My coffers hold ; I have it ‘neath my eyes,  
 And ‘neath my hand ; thus avarice which they blame  
 Is to the senses joy, and charms the soul.”<sup>1</sup>

The leading dramatist in the tragic vein, during the generation which succeeded the death of Racine, who like his greater predecessors clung to the classical models for his in-

<sup>1</sup> “ Plus on aime l’argent et moins on a de vices :  
 Le soin d’en amasser occupe tout le cœur,  
 Et quiconque s’y livre y trouve son bonheur.  
 Un ami qu’on implore ou refuse ou chancelle ;  
 L’argent est un ami toujours prompt et fidèle.  
 Le plaisir d’entasser vaut seul tous les plaisirs.  
 Dès qu’on sait que l’on peut remplir tous ses désirs,  
 Qu’on en a les moyens, notre âme est satisfaite. . . .  
 De tout ce que je vois je puis faire l’emplette,  
 Et cela me suffit. J’admire un beau château. . . .  
 ‘ Il ne tiendrait qu’à moi d’en avoir un plus beau ;’  
 Me dis-je. J’aperçois une femme charmante :  
 ‘ Je l’aurai si je veux,’ et cela me contente.  
 Enfin ce que le monde a de plus précieux  
 Mon coffre les renferme, et je l’ai sous mes yeux,  
 Sous ma main ; et par-là, l’avarice qu’on blâme,  
 Est le plaisir des sens et le charme de l’âme.”

spiration, was Prosper Jolyot de Cr  billon,<sup>1</sup> author of *Electra*, *Xerxes*, *Idomeneus*, *Atr  us* and *Thyestes*, and one or two other plays. Over the well-worn subjects of Greek mythology he cast the shadow and the glare of a morbidly tragic mind, which pursued and gibbeted sin with the zeal of a fury, and burned its impressions upon the hearts of the spectators by the sheer force of the horror which his pictures inspired. Therein, no doubt, was art and genius, if not of a very refined order. And in fact Cr  billon was not refined. He had made the fastidious Boileau shudder at his earlier efforts; the roughness of his work makes them read almost like burlesque. Better than most of his dramas is *Rhadamistus* and *Zenobia*, which might entitle him to be the Ford of the French stage, provided we deny him just that superiority of style which is generally to be accorded to the Frenchman over the Englishman in comparing two authors of similar spirit and tendency.

Le Sage,<sup>2</sup> best known out of France as the author of *Gil Blas* and *The Devil on two Sticks* (*Le Diable   boiteux*), was a satirical dramatist of no mean power; and, as a matter of fact, the success of his second comedy, *Turcaret* (1709), was too great to allow him to prosecute it farther in the same direction. This play was aimed against the financiers, who, towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV., wished to make money at any price, and whom Le Sage had studied when he was clerk to one of them. They certainly afforded ample material for satire, and Le Sage ridiculed them to some purpose, and with greater bitterness than he generally uses. They had sufficient influence and spite to make the dramatist perceive that the weapon which he had employed was too effective for his own peace of mind; and he cast it aside for that which he had already made use of in *The Devil on two Sticks*. The veteran Boileau had been no more tender towards this manifestation

<sup>1</sup> 1674-1762.<sup>2</sup> 1668-1747.

of the sterner spirit of the new age than he had been towards the vigorous *debut* of Crébillon ; and his unfavourable criticism may explain why Le Sage attempted a different *genre* from that which had earned him his first great success. He now, however, returned to fiction, and produced his masterpiece in *Gil Blas de Santillane*, a vivid picture of manners, an apotheosis of the indifferent worldling, to whom neither virtue nor trickery is in itself commendable or the contrary, but to whom the pursuit of happiness, and success in that pursuit, constitute the aim and end of existence. The book, it has been shrewdly said, is as moral as experience ; it is also as useful and as entertaining ; and this very fidelity to experience is a cause why it has never lost its popularity. There is an art of purely describing what is not pure ; and Le Sage possessed this art in the highest degree. He is moreover fresh and simple in style ; his charm is not easily described, but it is the charm of all great and simple writers, and of French writers in particular. He touches the evils of his time lightly, but always on the weak spot ; he glances past the graver questions of the day, but wherever his glance rests, there it illumines, suggests, and convicts. The style of Le Sage in *Gil Blas* is pre-eminently French ; in this respect he surpasses all the writers of the eighteenth century, not excluding Voltaire. Charles Nodier,<sup>1</sup> one of the most charming of modern French tale-tellers, was wont to say that he defied anybody, whether man of letters or philologist, to find in the French language an idiom, a familiar turn, a locution, which had not been used in *Gil Blas*. This may have been in the time of Charles Nodier, but forty years of literary fermentation have added much to the French tongue. Le Sage, could he come to life, would hardly recognise his mode of expression in the florid and coloured style of the Romantic School. The language

<sup>1</sup> 1780-1844.

has enriched itself, the fields open to literary genius have become wider, the scope of thought freer, and the modern expression has proportionately added to its former wealth. Nevertheless, one always returns to *Gil Blas* as to one of those literary works which constitute the canons of the French language. The selection of the subject exposed Le Sage to repeated charges of plagiarism; and Voltaire, because the author of *Tartare* had shrewdly, though good-humouredly, satirised him,<sup>1</sup> was weak enough—it may almost be said dishonest enough—to corroborate these ridiculous accusations, whereof the origin is traced to a Spanish Jesuit named Juan d'Isa, who could only bring the most absurd arguments in support of his plea. The truth is that, spite of its Spanish clothing, no more unfortunate selection than *Gil Blas* could have been made for

<sup>1</sup> The satire in question is contained in the following description of a dramatic performance recounted by Gil Blas, in the fifth chapter of the tenth book of Le Sage's great work: "I found the house full from floor to ceiling, a closely packed pit, and the stage covered with knights of the three military orders. 'Here is a numerous gathering,' said I to Don Alphonso. 'No wonder,' answered he, 'the tragedy they are going to play is written by Don Gabriel Triacquo (Voltaire), nicknamed the Fashionable Poet. Whenever the playdolls announce a new play by this author, the whole town of Valencia is topsy-turvy. Men, and women also, speak of nothing else; all the boxes are engaged in advance, and on the first night people crush themselves to death to get in, although the price of all the seats is doubled, with the exception of the pit, which is too-much feared for the manager to put it out of humour.' 'What frenzy!' said I to the governor; 'this extraordinary display of curiosity, this frantic impatience to hear all that Don Gabriel produces afresh, gives me a high idea of the genius of this poet.' 'Do not judge so fast,' answered Don Alphonso; 'one must guard against prejudice, the public is often dazzled by pieces of seeming brilliancy, and only appreciates them after they have been printed.' At this stage of our conversation the actors appeared. We immediately ceased talking, in order to listen to them with more attention. Applause began at the very first words; each verse was followed by a clamour of approbation, and each act by such a clapping of hands as to make believe that the house would crumble down. After the performance the author was pointed out to me; he passed from box to box, modestly offering his head to the crowns which the noblemen and the ladies were preparing to place thereon." In this manner Le Sage continues to satirise and satirise Voltaire, and finishes by saying that "two-thirds of his verses are bad, his types awkwardly described and ill sustained, and his thoughts often very obscure."



the purpose of proving a flagrant plagiarism, for no work can be, in spirit and philosophy, less Spanish and more French.

*Gil Blas*, masterpiece as it is, has given occasion for a sweeping remark on the nature of the author's genius, which, unduly explained, may appear unjustly applied : it is, that Le Sage was an author of one book. This judgment, we think, may be accepted, with small restrictions, in the best meaning of the term. *The Devil on two Sticks* is a work as full of that quiet biting irony and witty epicureanism which forms the chief characteristic of Le Sage's talent, as of observation and literary skill ; but, let us say so without fear of desecrating the glory of its author, it contained, condensed, and in a less varied and attractive form, all the fundamental maxims of philosophy, the sharp insight into the weaknesses of human nature, the brief and brilliant review of human life, which reappeared in the pages of *Gil Blas*. Le Sage, unlike many men of genius, had condensed all his qualities in one work : that work he wrote over again, but he distilled the essence of his former production, and rendered it more accessible to all minds by displaying further gifts of imagination. In this sense Le Sage was undoubtedly a man of one work ; but there are men of many who would willingly exchange their titles of celebrity for those contained in that one marvellous book, destined to live as long as the language it was written in. *Gil Blas* tells his own history, relates his illusions, his struggles, his failures and successes, with unimpaired cheerfulness and good-humoured philosophy. He dilates and reflects on all that he sees, and on the whole exercises his wit far less on his own history than on the acts of the society in which he lives. All that he relates is simple and drawn from the life ; still there is hardly a minor feature of the picture which does not aim both at satirising and finding excuses for the foibles of mankind. *Gil Blas* spares nothing and nobody, not even himself, his own shortcomings are exposed with spark-

ling *esprit* and vengeful frankness. He gives himself also credit, as he does to others too, for the movements of his better nature. He is a true type of men; kindly disposed, and good in essence, he is withal weak in the flesh; his virtue is not sufficiently rigid to preserve him from the temptations of evil,—he knows that he is doing wrong, says it, and repents afterwards; but nevertheless he does wrong. By nature he thinks discretion is the better part of valour; and yet we see him showing both moral and physical courage on fitting occasions. He laughs at the vanity of others; and yet he is himself supercilious, and his conceit leads him into ridiculous predicaments. He is kind, but he forgets his father and mother, who are languishing in poverty whilst he is thriving in opulence. Yet, on the whole, *Gil Blas* gives us the idea of an honest and good man: how is this? He has been something of a robber, he has had a hand in swindling tradesmen, and when prosperous he has not always discharged the most honourable functions; he has shown himself oblivious and ungrateful; he has “cut” his humble friend when he was secretary to a prime minister; in fact he has been the reverse of rigidly virtuous. In spite of ourselves, the impression grows upon us as we turn the pages of *Gil Blas*’s history; and it is because we see his better instincts always overcoming his weaknesses; because the world offers him so many temptations that he seems virtuous in eventually discarding them. As *Hamlet* is the incarnation of human hesitation, *Gil Blas* is the portrait of plodding humanity; he loses no time, and expends no happiness, upon meditation on the future existence of man; he considers that earthly affairs are quite enough for him to cope with; and, to alter slightly *Figaro*’s saying, he prefers to laugh at human weaknesses rather than to weep over them.

*Gil Blas* is the son of domestics; they are good people, but poor. They can hardly provide for their child, who woul

fare ill in the world if his uncle, an old canon, did not provide for him. Under this good man's auspices the young Blas learns a good-deal of Latin and some Greek. When he is seventeen the old canon gives him a few pieces of money, and a sorry mule, and lets him loose upon the world to seek his fortune. As to Gil Blas's parents, he says, they make him a present of their blessing, but no more. From the very first the candid young fellow falls into petty scrapes and misfortunes; the most serious is when he is in the hands of highwaymen, in their own sphere good fellows enough, and who kill people in order to live. Until he can escape Gil Blas is compelled to join them, and acquits himself of the duties of his new profession to the admiration of his companions. One day, however, he runs away with a lady captured by the robbers, and is rewarded for this good action by being thrust into prison. Thus, the first result of Gil Blas's experience is to show him that to do wrong without being found out is more advantageous than to act well when appearances are against one. After a series of adventures, in which he generally acts the part of dupe, and pending the time when he will attempt to dupe others, Gil Blas meets a school friend at Valladolid, one Fabrice, son of an Oviedo barber, who had eloped with a young lady of good family. This lady, later on, chose to continue her travels with another male companion; and Fabrice was there and then a footman out of necessity. Gil Blas easily allows himself to be prevailed upon to adopt his friend's profession. After trying one or two masters, he finds one after his taste in the famous doctor Sangrado, whose extensive practice is sufficiently proved by the number of patients who die under his auspices. Sangrado takes a liking to his young servant, tells him that the art of healing consists in bleeding and prescribing hot water, and, finally, raises him to the rank of junior partner. Señor Gil Blas is now a learned practitioner. He

bleeds with such enthusiasm that the streets of the unhappy town of Valladolid are filled with funerals. The young doctor is frightened out of his new avocations, flees from Valladolid, becomes again a servant, makes some money, falls in with the sharpers who had previously robbed him of his purse, associates with them; then encounters a young nobleman, who takes a fancy to him, and provides for his future happiness. But Gil Blas has not squared his accounts with Fortune, and he is soon buffeted again on the waves of human vicissitude; he becomes secretary to an archbishop, who accepts his services on condition that he will not fail to warn him when he notices some decrease in his sacerdotal eloquence, and who dismisses him outrageously when he ventures to do so. At length he is in Madrid, the scene of his future reverses and good luck. His fate is to gain the favour of great men, and eventually to incur their displeasure. The duke of Lerma, prime minister of the Spanish monarchy, takes him as secretary, and soon our hero is his favourite. Gil Blas sells the favours of his master; he is now rich, courted, petted; he becomes an insufferable coxcomb, an undutiful son, and a faithless friend. But, alas for Gil Blas! the favour of great men is uncertain; they throw over their minion when their own interests are at stake. This Gil Blas finds out to his cost. Having, at the instigation of the duke of Lerma, taken a conspicuous part in a doubtful intrigue, concerted for the benefit of the Prince of Spain, our hero is suddenly hurled from his envied pedestal down to the cold stones of the dungeon of Segovia, where he is left for some months to meditate on the instability of human affairs. Fortunately his jailer is a friend of former days, and Gil Blas has a faithful servant, Scipio, who has saved some of his money. One fine morning he is set at liberty, and, with Scipio, resolves to pass the remainder of his days far from temptation, in the seclusion of rustic life; but, as he is about to effect this wise purpose,



he meets Don Alphonso de Leyva, his former noble patron and friend. On hearing that he was indebted to Gil Blas for the government of the town of Valencia, Don Alphonso presses upon him a charming little property, whither Gil Blas duly repairs with his faithful Scipio. He marries, is happy, and despises worldly vanities. And here indeed the story might come to a close without losing any of its zest. Le Sage, however, was easily persuaded to write a second part to his novel; and, unlike most of these literary extensions, this continuation was as spirited, as pointed, as interesting, as the first instalment. Gil Blas has become a widower; he is disconsolate, and his friends look for some means of diverting him. At this juncture Philip the Third dies, the duke of Lerma falls into disgrace, and Gil Blas is prevailed upon to return to court, and seek the favour of the count-duke of Olivarez. This time, again, Gil Blas becomes a favourite; but he has suffered, and inflicted suffering upon others; he has purified himself in affliction, and for ever conquered the weak side of nature. He uses his power with moderation and wisdom, and retains it until his master's death. Gil Blas, now a middle-aged man, finally retires on his pleasant property of Lirias; marries again, and, as he says, "has children, of whom he piously believes he is the father." Such is a very brief outline of this chronicle of life. It is so true, so realistic in detail, so natural in causes and consequences, that one can hardly refrain from falling into the belief that one is reading an autobiography; and yet the hero is only a secondary personage in a profoundly interesting and extensive drama—the drama of human life.

The first two volumes of *Gil Blas* were published in 1715, the very year in which Louis XIV. died, the third in 1724, and the last in 1735, twenty years after the two first, and eleven years after the third.

Le Sage appears to have led the life of a practical philo-

sopher : he lived in Paris until within the last few years of his life ; and Joseph Spence,<sup>1</sup> who visited him there, gives the following description of his dwelling :—

“ His house is at Paris, in the Faubourg St. Jacques ; and so, open to the country air: the garden laid out in the prettiest manner that ever I saw, for a town garden. It was as pretty as it was small, and when he was in the study-part of it he was quite retired from the noise of the street or any interruptions from his own family. The garden was only of the breadth of the house, from which you stepped out into a raised square parterre, planted with a variety of the choicest flowers. From this, you went down, by a flight of steps on each side, into a *Berceau* ; which led to two rooms or summer-houses quite at the end of the garden. These were joined by an open portico, the roof of which was supported with columns, so that he could walk from the one to the other all under cover, in the intervals of writing. The berceaux were covered with vines and honeysuckles, and the space between them was grove-work. It was in the right-hand room, as you go down that he wrote *Gil Blas*.”

Le Sage also produced about sixty farces, parodies, and opéra-comiques for the minor theatres, of which a few may even be read at the present time with pleasure.

## § 2. LATER PORT-ROYALISTS.

The school of the Port-Royalists was not yet extinct, though Jansenism had fallen into disfavour, and was the object of persecution. Charles Rollin<sup>2</sup> was one of the later disciples of Pascal and Arnauld, and he suffered for his fidelity. The son of a cutler in Paris, he received an excellent education at the University, of which he subsequently became a Professor, after which he was made Principal of the

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men*, section vi. 1740-41.

<sup>2</sup> 1661-1741.

College at Beauvais. A year or two before the death of Louis XIV., he was driven from his post, and thenceforth devoted himself to authorship. He published an edition of the *Institutes of Quintilian*, and afterwards a learned *Treatise on Studies*, which has been highly praised by critics as competent as Villemain,<sup>1</sup> who calls it one of the best written of French works after the productions of men of genius. Rollin was a man of ability rather than of genius; and as a historian his talent is displayed in the highest possible form. His *Ancient History* and his *History of Rome*<sup>2</sup> are still consulted and admired, even after the labours of many more illustrious successors. His historical talent was exemplified especially in the care which he devoted to the collation and accurate citation of ancient authorities; and he deserves the eulogy which Montesquieu has passed upon him, as "the bee of France." His piety, his learning, and his simplicity, gained for Rollin a high repute amongst his contemporaries, which posterity has jealously guarded for him; and it was to his charge that Racine, on his deathbed, committed the education and moral training of his son.

Louis Racine,<sup>3</sup> a Jansenist like his master, does credit to the care bestowed on him by Rollin, and brings no discredit upon the great name which he had inherited. He was another of the younger generation whom Boileau delighted to snub; but in spite of the old man's discouragement—for he counselled him never to write in verse—Louis Racine left behind him a number of *Sacred Odes*, various minor poems, and two didactic pieces on *Grace* and *Religion*, of indifferent but not insignificant merit. He was, moreover, a German scholar in an age when the German language was understood by few foreigners; and he made an abortive attempt to translate Milton's *Paradise Lost*. His life of his father, which has

<sup>1</sup> 1790-1867.

<sup>2</sup> Continued from the date of the battle of Actium, by his pupil Cr  vier.

<sup>3</sup> 1692-1763.

already come under notice, is a monument at once of careful compilation and of filial respect.

Daguesseau,<sup>1</sup> another Port-Royalist of the eighteenth century, *avocat-général*, and afterwards *procureur-général* to the Parliament of Paris, an orator, a juriconsult, a statesman, and a moralist, was the author of several works of much dignity and worth, which added a lustre to his name and generation, though they are less read in our day than in his own. His writings were, indeed, especially suited to his contemporaries, by the graver of whom he was held in high esteem, though his stern and upright character rendered him obnoxious to men like Philip of Orléans, Cardinal Dubois, and their sycophants. A graphic picture of the times in which he lived may serve at once to illustrate his style, and to show that he at least had no illusions concerning the spirit and tendency of the later years of Louis XIV. Writing in 1698, he says—

“A restlessness, widely spread throughout the professions; an agitation which nothing can allay, inimical to repose, incapable of labour, bearing everywhere the burden of an unquiet and ambitious sloth; a universal revolt of all men against their condition, a kind of general conspiracy, wherein all seem agreed upon belying their characters; all professions confounded together, dignities disgraced, proprieties outraged; the majority of men, out of their ranks, despising their condition, and rendering it despicable; ever occupied with what they would wish to be, and never with what they are; full of vast projects, the only one which escapes them is that of being satisfied with their lot.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1698-1751.

<sup>2</sup> “Une inquiétude généralement répandue dans toutes les professions, une agitation que rien ne peut fixer, ennemie du repos, incapable du travail, portant partout le poids d’une inactivité et d’une ambition oisive, un soulèvement universel de tous les hommes contre leur condition, une espèce de conspiration générale dans laquelle ils semblent être tous convenus de se défaire de leur caractère; toutes les professions confondues, les dignités avilies, les bienséances violées; la plupart des hommes hors de leur place méprisant leur état et le



It was the spirit of the eighteenth century, revealed to this perspicacious mind before the century had opened. As we pass on we shall see yet more clearly the faithfulness of Daguesseau's forecast.

rendant méprisable. Toujours occupés de ce qu'ils veulent être et jamais de ce qu'ils sont, pleins de vastes projets, le seul qui leur échappe est celui de vivre contents de leur état."—*lère Mercuriale*.

## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. A SOCIAL INNOVATOR.

FRANCE was ripening fast for a change, when the eighteenth century dawned; and if the influence of Louis XIV in any appreciable degree retarded the new birth, it was only for a few short years. It was impossible any longer to suppress the activity of the human intellect; and though the weakness of the Regency<sup>1</sup> no doubt assisted its growth, the strictest personal despotism could not have availed to stifle the philosophy of a Montesquieu, a Voltaire, and a Rousseau. And this novel philosophy, be it observed, was in the first instance clearly exemplified in the political and economical maxims of its pioneers: maxims which had their origin in the bold speculations of English writers, but which, in England, rarely passed beyond the limits of speculation.

"Analogous theories," says a critic<sup>2</sup> whose general views are always essentially suggestive, "have frequently crossed the imagination of men, and analogous theories will cross it more than once again. In every age, and in every country, it suffices that a considerable change should be introduced into the conception of human nature, in order that, as a natural consequence, we should find immediately an ideal and a discovery brought to light in the domains of politics and religion. But this does not suffice for the propagation of the new doctrine, and especially not for the advance from speculation to appli-

<sup>1</sup> 1715-1723.<sup>2</sup> H. A. Taine, *l'Ancien Régime*, bk. iv. ch. 1.

cation. Born in England, the philosophy of the eighteenth century could not be developed in England; the fever of demolition and reconstruction remained in that country superficial and momentary. Deism, atheism, materialism, scepticism, ideology, the theory of a return to nature, the assertion of the rights of man, all the temerities of Bolingbroke, Collins, Toland, Tindal, and Mandeville . . . all revolutionary doctrines were there but hothouse plants, budding now and again in the isolated studies of a few thinkers. In the open air they came to nought, after a short blossom, conquered by the too powerful rivalry of the old vegetation to which already the soil was devoted. In France, on the other hand, the grain imported from England shoots and springs up with extraordinary vigour. From the time of the regency it was in flower. Like a species favoured by sun and climate, it invades every district, appropriates the atmosphere and the light of day for itself alone, and barely suffers under its shadow a few sickly specimens of an inimical species, a survivor of the ancient vegetation like Rollin, an example of an eccentric flora like Saint Martin.<sup>1</sup> By its large trees, by its crowded undergrowth, with the countless display of its shrubs and creeping-plants; by Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, and Buffon; by Duclos, Mably, Condillac, Turgot, Beaumarchais, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Barthélemy, and Thomas; by the crowd of its journalists, of its compilers and its talkers; by the *élite* and the herd of philosophy, science and literature, it takes possession of the academy and the theatre, drawing-rooms and conversation. All the great men of the century are its offshoots, and amongst them a few are to be classed with the highest whom human nature has produced."

<sup>1</sup> Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803) was a kind of spiritualistic mystic philosopher, who, first a lawyer, then a military man, abandoned everything else, and gave himself up wholly to the propagation of his doctrines.

The fact is, that speculation in England has nearly always been carefully distinguished from practical application; whilst in France it has nearly always been naturally and necessarily joined with it. In England there has been, for centuries back, so much political freedom and material prosperity, that Englishmen are slow to adopt violent methods of increasing these advantages, for fear of endangering what they already possess. In France, and especially in the eighteenth century, men had a minimum of political freedom and material prosperity, and they seized upon the ideas and devices which offered them the chance of increasing these, independently of their natural eagerness and curiosity of disposition. Moreover, the French intellect was particularly inclined, from the mere fact of its literary training and facility, to embrace with enthusiasm a course so full of promise as the adoption and development of a fresh and striking body of ideas.

In no one of the new generation of Frenchmen who came prominently forward soon after the death of Louis XIV., had these ideas taken such deep root, by none were they better understood or more clearly enunciated, than by Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu.<sup>1</sup> His *Persian Letters* (1721) glow with the spirit of the age: his great aim, born of the reaction against tyranny in general, and against the absolute monarchy in particular, was to destroy the idea of despotism, and to elevate the idea of human individual freedom. He was not a Rousseau in rashness, a Voltaire in vehemence, because he was an aristocrat by birth and education, because he clung to the traditions and the hopes of a constitutional monarchy, because he was an optimist by temperament, even if he inclined to be a democrat by conviction. He took a pride in drawing up his genealogy, of which he had every reason to be proud; but, in compensation,

<sup>1</sup> 1689-1755.



it was he who naturalised the term *citoyen*, in place of the discredited "subject"—a term which, from the moment of its rehabilitation, at once assumed dynamic force, and took its place in language and history as a monument of the destruction, at least in idea, of the old disgraceful relation of tyrant and victim. During the period elapsing between the appearance of the *Persian Letters* and the completion of the *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Montesquieu waited, in common with the rest of France, for the realisation of the hopes which had been placed in Louis XV., "the well-beloved." No sooner had the illusion vanished; no sooner did it appear that to-day was to be as yesterday, and that the new king was unwilling or unable to remove the burdens imposed by his predecessors, than the temper and the intellect of the nation instinctively turned round and settled down to the task which was thenceforth seen to be inevitable. The Revolution was decreed: the people made its declaration of independence; and Montesquieu was its first, and perhaps its most effective mouthpiece.

Montesquieu, born at his ancestral castle of la Brède, near Bordeaux, in Guienne—the country of Montaigne, and later of the Girondins—became successively counsellor and *président à mortier*<sup>1</sup> of the Bordeaux parliament, by hereditary title, at the age of twenty-six. Here, to begin with, was a privilege liable to every kind of abuse and inconvenience; but Montesquieu does not seem to have realised the fact in that light. He compromised all his life between the actual and the ideal; and he hit the mean in this instance by retaining the accidental honour, and discharging the duties of the position in such a manner that no one might say an elected president would certainly have discharged them

<sup>1</sup> The *mortier* was a kind of round cap worn by the chancellor, first president, and grand presidents of parliament. The latter were properly called *présidents à mortier*. Their cap was of black velvet, with one gold stripe; the first president had the same cap, with two gold stripes, and the chancellor one made of gold cloth, and trimmed with ermine.

better.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the bulk of his time was given to his private studies and researches ; and he began—significant indication of the forward-reaching activity of his mind—with laborious efforts in the domain of natural science. But the materials for such researches were hardly yet ready to his hand. A generation later Buffon succeeded, and that with extreme difficulty, in approximating to a satisfactory classification of the families of nature ; but Montesquieu's talents were not those of a Buffon ; and it was not many years before he discovered wherein his strength really lay. He was in his thirty-second year when the *Persian Letters* were published ; and though they bore no name upon the title-page, they at once secured success and influence. This semi-allegorical plan of conveying home-truths by speaking in the person of a foreigner, and thus placing oneself at a distance from one's subject-matter, in order to approach it more nearly—a plan adopted in England by Goldsmith,<sup>2</sup> no doubt in imitation of the *Persian Letters*—was not entirely an original idea with Montesquieu ; for it had been partially employed by Dufresny ;<sup>3</sup> but the fact subtracts little or nothing from the freshness of Montesquieu's work, which is signalised by a full richness of style, and by a powerful, mature, and hardy wit. The picture which he draws has two aspects. On one side we have a vivid description of the wretchedness and degradation produced by Oriental luxury, sloth, and despotism ; on the other is set forth, with an infinity of vivacious touches, the parallel between Persia and France—the operation, already begun, of despotism, self-indulgence, and moral cowardice, in a country which, after a brief period of glory acquired for it under an absolute monarchy, had already lost the substance of prosperity, and was content to go on sporting with the

<sup>1</sup> Some time later he sold the post, which made too large a claim upon his time.

<sup>2</sup> *The Citizen of the World*.

<sup>3</sup> 1654-1724 ; *The Siamese*, in the *Amusements sérieux et comiques*.

shadow, beneath the crumbling walls of an edifice ever ready to fall and crush the votaries of pleasure. In the course of his indirect exhortations to patriotism and prudence, Montesquieu holds up to his fellow-countrymen the example of the Troglodytes, men who had fallen from depth to depth, who had purchased pleasure at the cost of liberty, and who had recovered the self-respect of humanity only at the cost of absolute self-denial and stern perseverance. The application of the fable was not to be missed, and the readers of the *Persian Letters* did not fail to perceive it. Voltaire seems to have thought more poorly of this work than it deserves, for he speaks of it as "trivial and easy to write." The description is hardly just; for though Montesquieu's idea, once conceived, needed little more than the free play of his imagination to carry out, there can be no question as to the value of the lessons which it conveys. None of them is more valuable than that which arises out of the episode of the seraglio.

Usbek, the Persian prince who has come to Paris in quest of knowledge and worldly experience, and whose letters to his friends form the bulk of the work, has left behind him in Ispahan his establishment of concubines and eunuchs. For some time the news which he receives of them is fairly satisfactory, but at length various troubles begin to arise. The chief of the eunuchs is weak; the women are subtle, and continue to deceive their guardians. Presently their treachery to their absent lord is discovered, and Usbek is tormented by letters which leave no doubt of the extent of his misfortunes. He writes to the chief eunuch, bidding him punish the offenders; the chief eunuch dies before opening the letter. His functions are assumed by the oldest and feeblest of the slaves, who is hoodwinked by the women; but at last another eunuch writes to his master, and again informs him of his disgrace. Usbek authorises him to take summary vengeance;

and amongst those on whom the effects of his anger fall most severely is his favourite Roxana. Here is the letter which she writes to the Prince:<sup>1</sup>—

“Yes, I have deceived you : I have seduced your eunuchs, I have made a sport of your jealousy, and I have managed to convert your frightful harem into an abode of delight and pleasures.

“I am going to die ; the poison will soon be coursing through my veins ; for what should I do here, since the only man who made me cling to life is no more ? I die : but my spirit takes its flight in good company : I have despatched before me the sacrilegious guardians who have shed the best blood in the world.

“How could you deem me credulous enough to imagine that I was in the world only to adore your caprices ; that whilst you

<sup>1</sup> This hundred and sixty-first *Persian Letter* is the last, and in the original is as follows :—

“Où, je t’ai trompé ; j’ai séduit tes eunuques ; je me suis jouée de ta jalousie, et j’ai su de ton affreux serail faire un lieu de délices et de plaisirs.

“Je vais mourir ; le poison va couler dans mes veines ; car que ferais-je ici, puisque le seul homme qui me retenait à la vie n’est plus ? Je meurs ; mais mon ombre s’envole bien accompagnée : je viens d’envoyer devant moi ces gardiens sacrilèges qui ont répandu le plus beau sang du monde.

“Comment as-tu pensé que je fusse assez étourdi pour m’imaginer que je ne fusse dans le monde que pour adorer tes caprices ; que, pendant que tu te permets tout, tu eusses le droit d’affliger tous mes desirs ? Non : j’ai pu vivre dans la servitude ; mais j’ai toujours été libre. J’ai réformé tes lois sur celles de la nature ; et mon esprit s’est toujours tenu dans l’indépendance.

“Tu devrais me rendre grâces encore du sacrifice que je t’ai fait ; de ce que je me suis abaissée jusqu’à te paraître fidèle ; de ce que j’ai lâchement gardé dans mon cœur ce que j’aurais dû faire paraître à toute la terre ; enfin de ce que j’ai profané la vertu en souffrant qu’on appelât de ce nom ma soumission à tes fantaisies.

“Tu étais étonné de ne point trouver en moi les transports de l’amour : si tu m’avais bien connue, tu y aurais trouvé toute la violence de la haine.

“Mais tu as eu longtemps l’avantage de croire qu’un cœur comme le mien t’était soumis. Nous étions tous deux heureux ; tu me croyais trompée, et je te trompais.

“Ce langage, sans doute, te paraît nouveau. Serait-il possible qu’après t’avoir acablé de douleurs je te fusse en core d’admettre mon outrage ? Mais c’en est fait : le poison me couronne ; ma force m’abandonne ; la plume me tombe des mains ; je sens affaiblir jusqu’à ma main ; je me meurs.”



allowed yourself every liberty, you had the right to mortify all my desires? No; I could live in servitude, but I was always free. I have reformed your laws upon those of nature, and my mind always maintained its independence.

"Yet you ought to thank me for the sacrifice I have made for you; for the fact that I have demeaned myself to appear faithful to you; that I have, like a coward, concealed in my heart what I ought to have displayed to all the world; in short, that I have profaned virtue by suffering men to call by this name my submission to your whims.

"You were astonished that you did not discover in me the transports of love: if you had known me well you would have discovered there all the violence of hate.

"But you have long had the advantage of believing that a heart like mine was subject to you. We were both happy: you believed me deceived, and I deceived you.

"This language will doubtless seem new to you. Would it be possible that, after having overwhelmed you with grief, I could force you to admire my courage? But here is the end; the poison consumes me, my strength fails me; the pen falls from my hands; even my hatred grows weak; I die."

Was all this fine irony, this subtle analysis, expended on a simple fiction, with no other object than to give pleasure to a frivolous circle of readers? Or was there not, even in these details of the harem, a lesson for the selfish votaries of pleasure, who sacrificed the spirit to the body, whose passions brutalised those on whom they were lavished, until, in the country of a Rambouillet, a La Fayette, a Sévigné, there was good reason why woman, the puppet-queen of the drawing-room, should turn round upon her possessor, and assert the independence of her heart?

The great popularity which the *Persian Letters*,<sup>1</sup> as well as the subsequent works of Montesquieu, obtained, was the effect

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu himself tells us how the publishers went about "plucking all whom they met by the sleeves," and saying, "Sir, write me some *Persian Letters*."

and the illustration of the reaction which was taking place in the minds of Frenchmen. They were destroying the idols which they had worshipped in the age of Louis XIV. ; the intellect took its revenge for the subjection under which it had laboured, and the new-found liberty intoxicated all who tasted it. Just as dissolute manners, recklessness, audacity, succeeded the former piety, hypocrisy, and conventionality, so the liberty to write and speak everything without fear of suppression led men to produce, or to hail with enthusiasm, works in which the old order of things was condemned and ridiculed, and in which even religion itself was made the butt of sarcasm or the object of sceptical insinuation. Montesquieu gave his countrymen the kind of mental nourishment which they relished ; he did not hesitate, moreover, to tickle their appetite with passages of the voluptuous and suggestive kind which that generation particularly affected. When, in 1728, on the death of Louis de Sacy, Montesquieu became a candidate for the vacant place in the Academy, Cardinal de Fleury wrote to the thirty-nine academicians to say that the king would never give his sanction to the election of a man who had written a work containing impious sarcasms. Our author was enraged, threatened to leave the country, but at the same time had, in a few days, a new edition of his book printed, in which the passages which a cardinal or minister might condemn were either suppressed or softened, and presented himself this book to the cardinal.<sup>1</sup> This statement has, however, been denied, though it may have a slight substratum of truth. In any case Montesquieu was elected.

Before publishing anything further<sup>2</sup> Montesquieu travelled

<sup>1</sup> M. Walekenær, in his *Life of Montesquieu*, prefixed to his collected works, Didot, 1854, says that Voltaire, in his *Siecle de Louis XIV.*, mentions this fact. I have, however, been unable to find it in this work.

<sup>2</sup> He had, however, in 1725, issued the *Temple de Guise*, a somewhat heavy allegory, which Madame du Deffant styled the "Apocalypse of Gallantry."

for a few years in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, and England, where he went in Lord Chesterfield's yacht, and resided two years. At Rome he did reverence to Benedict XIV., and the latter sent him a batch of dispensations; but when the Frenchman learned the price which he was expected to pay for these, he declined them, saying that he should prefer simply to trust to the words of the Holy Father. In England he shone easily at the Court of George II., and was elected a member of the Royal Society. One day a bore was striving to make him believe something more or less incredible. "If it is not true," said the latter, "I give you my head." "I accept it," rejoined Montesquieu; "such little presents keep up friendly feelings." Yet his sarcasm was without bitterness; he made friends wherever he went, by dint of being all things to all men. "When I am in France," he said, "I make advances to every one; in England I make them to no one; in Italy I compliment every one; in Germany I drink with every one." One result of these travels was a pamphlet, *Reflexions on the Universal Monarchy in Europe*, of which only a few copies were privately printed; and a considerable part whereof was afterwards embodied in the *Spirit of the Laws*. In 1734, after two years of retirement at his quiet home at la Brède, appeared his *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness and Decline of the Romans*. In this work, a genuine monument of scholarship and judicious criticism, Montesquieu boldly places himself in rivalry with Machiavelli, Saint Evremond, and Bossuet, who had treated the same subject before; and in largeness of grasp and historical insight he undoubtedly shines by comparison with his predecessors. The style is a little unequal, and the treatment spasmodic; but the work bears throughout abundant evidence of conscientious thought. Take, for instance, the following sentences:—

"If Cæsar and Pompey had thought as Cato did, others would

have thought as Cæsar and Pompey did; and the Republic, destined to perish, would have been dragged to the precipice by another hand.

"Cæsar pardoned everybody; but it seems to me that the moderation one displays after usurping everything does not deserve great praise. . . .

"Was not the crime of Cæsar precluded from being punished otherwise than by assassination? And to ask why he was not attacked by open force, or by the laws, was not this the same as asking an explanation of his crimes?"<sup>1</sup>

"It was so impossible for the Republic to be re-established that there happened what had never yet been seen, that there was no longer a tyrant, and that there was no liberty; for the causes which had destroyed it still existed."<sup>2</sup>

In the age of Montesquieu this was a philosophy of history at once striking and fresh; and even in the nineteenth century historians might do worse than mould themselves on the style of this treatise.

But his masterpiece is the *Spirit of the Laws*, published a few years before his death, in 1748, of which Voltaire, not a specially favourable critic of Montesquieu, and who persisted in classifying him with the age of Louis XIV., says: "The human race had lost its titles: Montesquieu has recovered and restored them to it." The eulogy is deserved; and it was not without justifiable pride that the author himself

<sup>1</sup> "Si Cæsar et Pompée avoient pensé comme Caton, d'autres auroient pensé comme Cicéron; et la république, destinée à périr, auroit été entraînée au précipice par une autre main. Cæsar pardonna à tout le monde; mais il me semble que la modération que l'on montre après qu'on a tout usurpé ne mérite pas de grandes louanges. . . . Le crime de Cæsar, qui vivait dans un gouvernement libre, n'était-il pas hors d'état d'être puni autrement que par un assassinat? Et demander pourquoi on ne l'avait pas poursuivi par la force ouverte ou par les lois, n'était-ce pas demander raison de ses crimes?" *Grandeur et Détérioration des Romains*, ch. xi.

<sup>2</sup> "Il était tellement impossible que la république pût se rétablir, qu'il arriva ce qu'on n'avait jamais encore vu, qu'il n'y eut plus de tyran, et qu'il n'y eut pas de liberté: car les causes qui l'avaient détruite subsistaient toujours. — *Ibid.* ch. xii.



wrote in his preface : "When I saw what so many great men in France, in England, and in Germany, had written before me, I was buried in admiration ; but I did not lose courage. I said with Correggio, 'I also am a painter.'" <sup>1</sup>

The aim of Montesquieu in this grand work is to a great extent didactic ; he attacks the prejudices of men. "I should think myself the happiest of mortals," he says, "if I could make men overcome their prejudices. I here call prejudices not that which causes one to be ignorant of certain things, but that which causes one to be ignorant of oneself." The twenty laborious years which the author dedicated to his task were spent in steadily working towards rather than upon recognised principles. "I have often commenced and often abandoned this work," he tells us. "I have a thousand times cast the sheets I had written to the winds ; every day I felt my hands sinking by my side ;" <sup>2</sup> I pursued my object without forming a plan ; I knew neither rules nor exceptions ; I found the truth only to lose it ; but when I had discovered my principles, all that I was seeking came to me." It is perhaps not the most scientific process : it is, at all events, the process of a man who can live twenty years without earning a penny ; it is the process of one who can wait upon the world and upon posterity, and from whom the world and posterity may expect great things.

Montesquieu begins by considering laws in general, and the varying character of laws as they proceed from different modes of government ; and in this examination he is guided by the conviction that law-makers "have not been governed solely by their caprices." He discovers a harmony amongst the laws of each nation, and even amongst the principles which have regulated the laws of different nations. Every law is found to be connected with all the rest, and to depend

<sup>1</sup> "Ed io anche son pittore."

<sup>2</sup> "Je sentais les mains paternelles tomber."—*Bis patriæ cecidere manus.*

on some other wider and more general law ; and it is only by throwing himself into the current of a nation's history, and by considering it esoterically, that he is able in all cases to discover this connection and interdependence. The system upon which he addresses himself to his task is simple and clear. Borrowing from Gravina<sup>1</sup> these two definitions : that the political state is the union of all individual forces, and that the civil state is the union of all individual wills, he proceeds to consider each particular law as relating to, and especially suited for, the particular nation which has enacted it, whether for the actual constitution of the state, as is the case with political laws, or for the conduct of the state, as with civil laws. At this point his system, so intelligently based, becomes notably expanded, by the introduction of a principle which, in his mouth, was almost, if not quite, original ; although it is now a generally recognised truth. Laws must bear relation " to the physical characteristics of a country, to a frigid, a torrid, or a temperate clime ; to the quality of the soil, to its situation, to its size, to the way of living of its people, whether labourers, hunters, or shepherds ; they must be accommodated to the degree of liberty which the constitution can support ; to the religion of the inhabitants, to their inclinations, to their wealth, to their number, to their commerce, to their customs, to their manners. Finally, they bear relations amongst themselves ; with their origin, with the object of the law-maker, with the order of facts upon which they are based."<sup>2</sup> Such, in short, is Montesquieu's method ; and he pursues it, historically and analytically, under this threefold division to begin with—according as the form of government is a republic, a constitutional monarchy, or a despotism.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina (1664-1718) a celebrated Italian jurist, and Professor of Civil and Canon Law at the University of Rome, wrote the *Origines juris civilis*.

<sup>2</sup> *Esprit des Loix*, bk. i. ch. 3.

<sup>3</sup> La Harpe and others have professed themselves unable to see any but an

The strength of Montesquieu's work resides, perhaps, rather in its implications than in the actual deductions of the author. Its weakness has been considered, at all events by many of his own countrymen, to consist in the fact that he rests satisfied with historical analysis, and that, whilst his own bias is clearly towards popular sovereignty, he abstains from saying that full political rights can only be secured by popular sovereignty. Fourteen years after the first appearance of the work, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his *Social Contract*, wherein he says: "The only modern capable of creating that great and useless science (of political rights) would have been the illustrious Montesquieu. But he did not care to treat of the principles of political rights; he was content with treating of the actual rights of established governments; and nothing in the world is more different than these two studies. . . . The people gives neither chairs, nor pensions, nor seats in academies: judge whether its rights could be established by such men." The flaw in the criticism is manifest. The people—say a pure democracy—could and would give these and many other similar advantages; and Montesquieu's own arguments logically conduct to such a conclusion, as when he says that "not much probity is necessary for the maintenance and sustenance of a monarchical or despotic government. The force of laws in one, the arm of the prince ever upraised in the other, rule and contain all. But in a popular state, one spring more is needed, which is *virtue*."<sup>1</sup> The fact is that Montesquieu saw clearly both the abstract superiority of popular sovereignty and its impossibility as a concrete existence in his own day. Rousseau believed vividly in its possibility; but it often requires more than a century of vivid

accidental difference between the monarchical and the despotic government—a difference of illumination and good will in the supreme ruler. Could they see no necessary generic difference between the law-making power under Louis XIV. and William III. of England?

<sup>1</sup> *Esprit des Lois*, bk. iii. ch. 3.

belief to convert the idea into an actuality. Rousseau began pretty much where Montesquieu left off; and if there had not been a Montesquieu, we may be permitted to doubt whether there would have been a Rousseau.

There were two sentences in the *Spirit of the Laws*, wherein especially Montesquieu wrote the doom of aristocracy and absolute monarchy in France, and contributed as much as any other writer to the downfall of both. "The principle of the monarchy," he says, "is corrupted when the highest dignities are the brands of original servitude, when the respect of the people is robbed from the great, and when these are made the vile instruments of arbitrary power. It is corrupted still more when honour is put in contradistinction with honours, and when one can be at the same time covered with infamy and with dignities.<sup>1</sup> . . . The monarchy is lost when a prince believes that he displays greater power in changing the order of things than in following it; when he takes their natural functions from some in order to give it arbitrarily to others, and when he prefers his caprices to his convictions. The monarchy is lost when the prince, referring everything solely to himself, summons the state to his capital, the capital to his court, and the court to his person."<sup>2</sup> What an eloquent commentary on these texts must not every one who read them have supplied from the annals of the reign of Louis XIV., and from the events which were passing in France up to the very eve of the Revolution.

## § 2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMISTS.

A work like that of Montesquieu is of the few which invariably create a school. The *Spirit of the Laws* formed a

<sup>1</sup> *Esprit des Loix*, bk. viii. ch. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, bk. viii. ch. 6.



school of upright statesmen and political economists—the school of Turgot and Quesnay, of Malesherbes and Necker. The first of these,<sup>1</sup> a sound and deliberate rather than a brilliant writer, an ambitious and generous rather than a successful politician, has been aptly called the l'Hôpital of the eighteenth century. After serving his country for some time in the comparatively inconspicuous capacity of intendant of the *généralité* of Limoges—a post which he refused to quit for more lucrative ones at Rouen and Lyons—he was appointed by Maurepas, at the instance of his friend the Abbé de Véri—minister of marine (1774), and shortly afterwards controller-general of the finances. It was one of those acts which so often, in the eighteenth century, gave true patriots a momentary gleam of hope that wiser counsels would be allowed to prevail in the government; for Turgot was already known, not only in the literary world but in the world of politics, as an honest, bold, and able man. In his youth he had raised his voice in the interests of the still-persecuted Protestants. His economical articles in the *Encyclopædia* had brought him into prominent notice about the time of Montesquieu's death, and had fixed upon him the hopes of thousands of his fellow-countrymen. He had had to wait long before he attained the object of his honourable ambition; but it was not in his destiny, nor in the destiny of France, that he should be allowed to rescue the nation. On the very day of his accession to office as controller-general he had an interview with the young king Louis XVI., wherein he unfolded the plan by which he pledged himself to save France from bankruptcy. He was asked to put down his ideas in writing; and he did so. He began by laying down the necessary conditions of success;—that there should be no further increase of taxation, no more loans, no more repudiations of liabilities on the part of public men, for the mere purpose of personal relief. He

<sup>1</sup> 1727-1781.

insisted that the expenditure should be rigidly reduced to twenty million francs below the revenue ; that the expenses of all public departments should be arranged in concert with the minister of finance ; that individual immunities and sinecures in the farming of the taxes should be abolished. "I shall be alone," he tells the king, "in the struggle against abuses of every kind, against the crowd of prejudices which are opposed to all reform, and which are such a powerful instrument in the hands of men interested in perpetuating disorder. I shall have to combat the natural kindliness, the generosity of your Majesty and of the persons most dear to him. I shall be feared, even hated by the majority of the Court. . . . The people for whom I shall be sacrificing myself is so easy to deceive that I may probably incur its hatred by the very measures which I shall take for its defence. I shall be calumniated, and perhaps with sufficient show of truth to deprive me of your Majesty's confidence. . . . Your Majesty will recollect that it is upon the faith of his promises that I take on myself a burden perhaps beyond my powers ; that it is to him personally, to the upright man, the just and good man, rather than to the king, that I commit myself."

It was a noble and a courageous offer, made by one who was really strong enough to carry out his plans. Louis was touched by it, entered into an engagement with the minister, and began by supporting him. But the court and the older counsellors of the king were stronger than he ; and Maurepas himself was amongst the first to oppose the alarming energy and obnoxious honesty of the controller-general. A yet grander exposition of Turgot's scheme for the reconstitution of public prosperity remains to us in a work drawn up by one of his friends ;<sup>1</sup> but the first manifestation of his designs was

<sup>1</sup> According to M. H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xvi. p. 324, probably Dupont de Nemours. I owe a great deal of this chapter to this excellent History of France.

sufficient to rouse an opposition, which, coupled with the weakness of his royal patron, neutralised his efforts. This is not the place wherein to follow the course of those efforts, to examine where and how far they succeeded, nor to compare the ideas of Turgot with those which, in one form or another, were brought into contrast with them—as in the case of the *Treatise on the Corn Laws* (*De la législation des Grains*), by the banker Necker. The political and economical literature of the eighteenth century would alone fill one of our volumes, by the mere examination of its conflicting views; and indeed it belongs rather to the domain of political than to that of literary history. Within a couple of years of the minister's appointment, he found a powerful league opposed to him; and Louis listened to his enemies, precisely as he had himself foretold. It was in August 1744 that Turgot assumed his functions; in May 1776 he sought an audience of the king, in order to propose an edict which he considered necessary, and which he prefaced as usual by a written exposition of motives. "Yet another memoir!" Louis ironically exclaimed. He listened to it, notwithstanding; and when Turgot had finished: "Is that all?" he asked. "Yes, sire!" "So much the better!" said the king, turning his back upon him. A couple of hours later Turgot received his dismissal. He lived barely five years longer; resembling de l'Hôpital in the manner of his death, as in the fortunes of his life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire was a warm friend and admirer of Turgot; so much so, indeed, that the latter was compelled to ask him to be more discreet in his sympathy. Even after this, Voltaire wrote, in his *Past and Present*:

"Contemple la brillante aurore	Dicté ses triomphantes lois;
Qui t'annonce enfin les beaux jours;	La vérité vient avec elle . . .
Un nouveau monde est près d'éclorre :	Quels dieux répandent ces bienfaits ?
Até disparaît pour toujours.	—C'est un seul homme ! Et le vulgaire
Vois l'auguste philosophie,	Méconnaît les biens qu'il a faits !"
Chez toi si longtemps poursuivie,	

In his *Voyage of Reason* and his *Diatribe to the Author of the Ephemerides*, he had already lent his powerful, though sometimes compromising, assistance to the controller-general.

I have called Turgot a disciple of the school of Montesquieu. He was a disciple also of Quesnay,<sup>1</sup> a learned physician, whose bold but somewhat crude work on political economy had inspired him, as it inspired many others of his contemporaries, with some of his best ideas. The witty and dissolute abbé Galiani, a Neapolitan, who lived for a long time in Paris, was amongst the literary opponents of Turgot's reforms, and pleased himself by declaring Quesnay to be the Antichrist. It was too great an honour, coming from such a man; for the godless rake in priest's garb, whose objection to Quesnay was incited by the latter's application of scientific laws to the amelioration of the condition of humanity, should have reserved the extreme epithet of his vocabulary for a more powerful writer. Nevertheless, Quesnay was a worthy pioneer of that school of political economy which considers the tiller of the ground as the principal column of the social edifice—a science called by Quesnay's disciple Dupont de Nemours *physiocratie*—and which contributed almost as much as the metaphysical school to the intellectual regeneration of France.

Amidst the crowd of innovators by whom our attention now begins to be distracted, of course utopists make themselves more or less prominent; and of these Bernardin de Saint-Pierre<sup>2</sup> was one of the most philanthropic and the most impracticable. A native of Havre, his adventurous career exhibits him successively as a scientific traveller in Martinique, an engineer at Dusseldorf, a professor of mathematics in Paris, a journalist in Amsterdam, an officer at St. Petersburg, an insurgent in Poland, an engineer again in the Ile-de-France. Attracted by the doctrines of Rousseau, he settled in Paris as a man of letters, where, from the age of forty until close upon his death, he published a large number of works, of great variety and of considerable charm of style:

<sup>1</sup> 1694-1774.<sup>2</sup> 1737-1814.



a *Voyage to the Ile-de-France, Studies on Nature, The Indian Cottage, The Harmonics of Nature*, and, most popular and charming of them all, *Paul and Virginia* (1787). His art was to paint in words ; and he employed it, as a faithful student of nature, more successfully than any of his contemporaries. He conceived plans which, if they could be carried out, might undoubtedly abolish the greater part of human sorrow ; for he always extolled humanity, tolerance, and the absolute sway of justice, and endeavoured to show that man can only be happy upon this earth by labour.

## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. VOLTAIRE.

IN a pretty episode of one of his early works, *Rays and Shadows* (*Rayons et Ombres*), entitled *A Glimpse into an Attic*, Victor Hugo has drawn the picture of a young working woman of Paris. The furniture is scanty and simple; the room is tastefully but humbly adorned; over the chimney-piece hangs the decoration which her father had won by his merit and bravery; all speaks of innocence and contentment; but *latet anguis in herba*. What or who is the temptation which besets that ingenuous girl? From whence does danger threaten her? In a corner of the room, half hidden upon a cupboard, the serpent of this Eden lies ready to gloze in the ear of the guileless Eve. It is a volume of the works of Voltaire, "that ape of genius, sent as the devil's missionary to man." We know Victor Hugo sufficiently well, his boldness, his great services to his generation, the eloquent directness of the language with which he is wont to dazzle or sway the mind of his fellow-countrymen; and it is he who warns us against Voltaire as a missionary of the devil. De Maistre says very much the same thing.<sup>1</sup> Others have described him as an idiot, an unclean imbecile, a *drôle*, a *franche canaille*, and what not.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Un homme unique à qui l'enfer avait remis ses pouvoirs."

<sup>2</sup> I am much indebted in this chapter to Paul Albert's "Voltaire" in *La Littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, as well as to G. Desnoûestierre, *Voltaire et la Société au dix-huitième siècle*, 2 volumes.

It is now close upon a hundred years since his death, and the definite judgment of posterity has scarcely yet been passed upon François-Marie-Arouet de Voltaire.<sup>1</sup> His long life was a series of literary activities and successes, which left behind it, in the opinion of some, the greatest reputation gained by any French intellect of the eighteenth century, and, in the opinion of others, as we have seen, the greatest reproach which it is possible to conceive. Born as ugly as Pope, as sickly as Pascal, his genius burned from the first with remarkable brightness in its apparently frail tenement. He ate little, slept little, drank little but black coffee, and of that very much, and yet cheated death of his expectations for eighty-four years, as full of hard work and mental excitement as any of his contemporaries. A native of Poitou, bred in Paris, where his father was a notary, he received but an indifferent education at the hands of the Jesuits in the college Louis-le-Grand. They taught him "little Latin and less Greek"; and if they had laboured to make him a good Christian, or even a moral man, all that can be said is that they failed egregiously. On leaving college he fell into the most dissolute society in Paris; was twice banished from home by his father; and once ran away from the house of a *procureur* with whom M. Arouet<sup>2</sup> had placed him, and lived for some little time in Holland. On his return to Paris, where he was appreciated and esteemed by men of fashion as well as of letters, he earned fame at the age of twenty-four, by his earliest venture, the poetic tragedy of *Œdipus*. It was as a dramatist that he continued to write, with no little success, for many years, producing in quick succession *Artémise*, *Mariamne*, *Brutus*, *The Death of Cæsar*, *Mérope*, and a dozen other tragedies, together with half-a-dozen comedies of inferior merit.

In the meanwhile the anger of his father, softened by

<sup>1</sup> 1694-1778.

<sup>2</sup> The family name of Voltaire.

his son's triumphs, had been followed up by the more formidable anger of the authorities. Even the Regency, lax enough to others, was scandalised and annoyed by the audacious satirist, and sent him three times to the Bastille: once for a copy of verses which some one else had written; once for a Latin epigram on the Regent, under the title of *Puero Regnante*; once for wishing to fight the chevalier Rohan-Chabot, who had set on his bullies to give the poet a drubbing. In addition to these imprisonments he had been sent out of the capital four or five times—to Sully, to Chatenay, and elsewhere, for various minor offences. He fared no better under Louis XV., who refused to accept the dedication of the *Henriade*, and forbade him to print it. His last sojourn in the Bastille was ended only on condition that he would go across the channel; and thus, at the age of thirty, he found himself with barely a friend in England. Between the years 1724 and 1730 he scarcely printed a line of French; but he was employing the period of adversity to good purpose. Deprived of his pensions, and in a country whose language he scarcely understood, Voltaire might have fared ill enough if he had not been sufficiently fortunate, some years before, to make the acquaintance of Lord Bolingbroke,<sup>1</sup> at the castle of the Marquise de Villette, at La Source, in Touraine. Bolingbroke, whose political crime had been pardoned, and who had returned to England, received Voltaire with every mark of good will. He might fairly have excused himself from benefiting him at all, and only have shown him cool politeness; for some time ago Voltaire had proposed to dedicate his *Henriade* to the Englishman, and had apparently soon forgotten that he had ever broached the subject. But Bolingbroke was not the man to recall what was, in fact, never intended as a slight; and the kindness which the poet now received from him was gracefully acknowledged in 1730, in the dedication of *Brutus*

<sup>1</sup> St. John.



This play is preceded by a *Discourse on Tragedy*, in which Voltaire maintains the necessity of rhyme in French tragedy, says that Shakspeare was the only one, as acknowledged by Englishmen themselves, who made ghosts speak successfully, for "within that circle none durst move but he,"<sup>1</sup> and pretends that in France, "love among theatrical heroes often is nothing but gallantry, in England it sometimes degenerates into debauchery." Bolingbroke introduced Voltaire to his literary friends, Swift, Pope, Gay; and at Pope's villa of Twickenham he met many more congenial acquaintances. He speaks gratefully, in his letters to Thieriot and others, of the treatment which he received in England—from George II. amongst the rest. Before he left France, Voltaire had forwarded a letter of exchange to a London merchant; and, having left this for many weeks in his agent's hands, he found, on going to draw his money, that the man had just been made bankrupt. The king heard of this misfortune, and sent the poet a hundred guineas. The Frenchman was welcomed also to the house of Mr. Falkener, a city merchant living at Wandsworth, and to whom, later (1732), he dedicated *Zaïre*. In this dedication he says that all lovers of art are brethren, that the English possess a happy freedom of thought, that they have no need of the glances of the master to honour and reward great talents of every kind, and finally draws a contrast between the burial of Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Bracegirdle in Westminster Abbey, and the funerals of Molière and Mademoiselle Le Couvreur. When a second edition of *Zaïre* was published, Voltaire headed it with another letter to Mr. Falkener, who in the meanwhile had become English ambassador at Constantinople, in which he makes some remarks about Aaron Hill's translation into English of his tragedy, brought out as *Zara*; says that "Dryden, who was, however, a great genius, puts into the mouths of his heroes

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire quotes this line in English.

in love either rhetorical exaggerations or indecencies ;” and finishes by stating that “the art of pleasing seems to belong to the French, and the art of thinking to the English.” At Wandsworth, in fact, a great deal of his time was spent ; and here, after reading Shakspeare, and for the first time beginning to appreciate him, he wrote the first act of his *Brutus* in English prose. Three months again were passed in the house of Lord Peterborough, Swift also being present during part of the time. Voltaire calls Swift “the Rabelais of good society ;” but he seems to have preferred the society of Pope, “the most elegant, correct, and harmonious poet whom England has had.”<sup>1</sup> The epithets are well chosen ; and, at the time, they were undoubtedly just. Between Dr. Johnson and Voltaire there was a deep-seated antipathy, and the former states in his *Lives of the English Poets* that “Voltaire . . . had been entertained by Pope at his table where he talked with so much grossness that Mrs. Pope was driven from the room.” This anecdote may, possible enough, have had some foundation in fact. Voltaire may have forgotten himself for a moment ; Mrs. Pope, an ardent Roman Catholic, may have taken offence ; Johnson would be extremely likely, under such circumstances, to bring his heaviest artillery to bear upon the Frenchman ; but, in any case, Voltaire and Pope undoubtedly maintained friendly relations for many years afterwards. Johnson says also, “Pope discovered by a trick that he (Voltaire) was a spy for the French, and never considered him as a man worthy of confidence.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire was under many literary obligations to Swift. Compare for example his *Relation de la maladie, de la confession, de la mort, et de l'apparition du Jésuite Berthier* (1759), to Swift's *Account of the death of Mr. Partridge*, and the *Answers and Vindication*. In his *Parallel between Horace, Balaam, and Pope*, Pope is praised for his *Essay on Man*, but Voltaire ridicules the English poet's portrait of Lord Hervey as Sporus, as well as the *Dunciad*.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire returned the compliment ; and as Johnson had treated him

Voltaire applied himself laboriously to the study of English, and read, amongst other English works, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which had been made fashionable by Addison's careful study of it in the *Spectator*. One day the Frenchman was railing at the "disgusting and abominable story," when Dr. Young, who was of the party, improvised a couplet in order to avenge his countryman :—

" You are so witty, profligate, and thin,  
At once we think thee Milton, Death, and Sin."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst in England, our author published in English an *Essay on Epic Poetry*, destined to serve as an introduction to the *Henriade*, and an *Essay upon the Civil Wars of France extracted from curious manuscripts*. Both works were afterwards translated into French, though the latter was forbidden to be published in France. His English publications and reading did not, however, prevent Voltaire either from preparing fresh works in his own language, or from modifying what he had already written. The *Henriade*, of which a surreptitious and truncated edition had appeared in 1723, was published by subscription in a complete form in London, 1728, adorned with engravings, and most sumptuously printed. The king, the court, and a large number of English men of letters, made a point of adding their names to the list of Voltaire's patrons, which contained no less than three hundred and thirty-four names. The epic was dedicated to the queen, and we give the dedication as a specimen of Voltaire's English.

very contemptuously in his Preface to Shakspeare, wrote in the article "*Art Dramatique*" in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* : Je ne veux point soupçonner le Sieur Jonson d'être un mauvais plaisant, et d'aimer trop le vin ; mais je trouve un peu singulier qu'il compte la bouffonnerie et l'ivrognerie parmi les beautés du théâtre tragique."

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's "Young" in the *Lives of the English Poets*. Dr. Johnson seems, however, to doubt if this couplet was an "extemporaneous reproof," and quotes in support of this the poetical dedication of Young's Sea-piece to Voltaire.

Madam,

It is the fate of Henry the Fourth to be protected by an English queen. He was assisted by that great Elizabeth, who was in her age the Glory of her Sex. By whom can his Memory be so well protected, as by her who resembles so much Elizabeth in her personal Virtues?

Your Majesty will find in this book bold impartial truths, morality unstained with superstition, a spirit of liberty equally abhorrent of rebellion and of tyranny, the rights of kings always asserted, and those of mankind never laid aside.

The same Spirit, in which it is written, gave me the confidence to offer it to the virtuous consort of a king who among so many crowned heads enjoys, almost alone, the inestimable honour of ruling a free nation; a king who makes his power consist in being beloved, and his Glory in being just.

Our Descartes, who was the greatest Philosopher in Europe, before Sir Isaac Newton appeared, dedicated his Principles to the celebrated Princess Palatine Elizabeth, not, said he, because she was a princess, for true philosophers respect princes, and never flatter them, but because of all his readers she understood him the best, and loved Truth the most.

I beg leave madam, (without comparing myself to Descartes) to dedicate the *Henriade* to your Majesty, upon the like account, not only as the protectress of all arts and sciences, but as the best judge of them.

I am, with that profound respect which is due to the greatest virtue, as well as to the highest rank, may it please your Majesty, your Majesty's most humble, most dutiful, most obliged servant,

VOLTAIRE.

Three editions of the *Henriade* were sold in as many weeks. Eighty copies were subscribed for in France, and the books were sent to Thieriot; but whilst the latter was at mass, the supply which had been sent over from London was stolen from his residence. It is not quite clear on what grounds Thieriot has been accused of contriving the theft; but Voltaire's letter to him on the subject shows what was his own opinion of the matter. "This occurrence, my friend,



may sicken you of going to mass," he writes ; "but it need not prevent me from continuing to love you, and to thank you for your trouble." "He has since offered," the poet writes to Destouches, "to reimburse me ; but he would be ruined ; and as for me, I should be unworthy of being a man of letters if I did not prefer losing a hundred *louis* to discommoding my friend." It has been said that, as a silent revenge for the failure of Sully's descendant to take notice of the outrage committed by de Rohan's bullies against Voltaire—for he was dining at the duke of Sully's when he was sent for by one of de Rohan's lackeys, and treacherously beaten—our author substituted the name of Duplessis-Mornay for that of Sully, in the verses wherein he had celebrated the virtues of Henry IV.'s famous minister.

After a three years' sojourn in England, Voltaire received permission to return to his native country. He went back in 1729, and lived for a while in Paris, and then in or near Rouen, where a new edition of the *Henriade*, under the name of the *Ligue*, was published, and where he completed the *Life of Charles XII.*<sup>1</sup> commenced in England. He had not left the land of his exile without bringing thence many favourable impressions, as well of its hospitality as of its liberty of action and opinion. Compared with the France of Voltaire's youth, England could boast of a free press, of freedom in religion, in philosophy, in criticism. Men like Newton, Locke, Shaftesbury, Toland, could write and teach what they thought ; in France the slightest approach to innovation was almost certain to be suppressed as soon as it made its appearance. Voltaire could not be otherwise than forcibly struck by the contrast ; and his *Philosophical Letters*, published as *Letters about the English*, bore witness to the strength of his impressions. In one of them, the thirteenth, he had lightly sketched one or two of Locke's ideas ; and the Parliament of Paris at once ordered the book to be torn and burnt by the executioner

<sup>1</sup> King of Sweden. 1682-1718.

In 1736 he wrote a treatise on the *Elements of Newton's Physics*; it was interdicted by Daguesseau, who was a zealous disciple of Descartes. The *History of Charles XII.* shared the same fate, on the pretext of an offence given to Augustus of Poland. The poetical *Epistle to Urania* caused Voltaire to be summoned before the lieutenant of police, and he only extricated himself by attributing his work to Chaulieu, who was dead; the *Temple of Taste* put Voltaire in dread of a *lettre de cachet*; <sup>1</sup> the privilege to print was refused to the tragedy *The Death of Cæsar*; the poem *The Worldling*, obliged him to flee for two months; the tragedy *Mahomet* was placed under interdict after two representations.<sup>2</sup>

Cardinal Fleury, the prime minister, died in 1742; and, on the entreaty of Voltaire's friends d'Argenson, the duke de Richelieu, and Madame de Pompadour, the author tried his hand as a courtier. For four years he wasted his time, writing such poems as *Fontenoy*, the *Events of 1744*, and such operas as the *Princess of Navarre*, and the *Temple of Glory*. He was made a gentleman of the king's chamber, historiographer-royal, and, after much opposition, a member of the Academy. He was now fifty-two years old; and he began to long more than ever for freedom and retirement. He had never succeeded in pleasing Louis XV., not even when he made a point of comparing him to Trajan! After the success of his *Temple of Glory*, he wrote an epigram on himself, which shows at what price he valued his triumphs at court.<sup>3</sup> Writing thirty

<sup>1</sup> A *lettre de cachet*, a letter folded and sealed with the king's *cachet*, or little seal, was an arbitrary warrant of imprisonment, and contained secret instructions to proceed against some person named in the letter. It was often signed in blank, so that the name of the person to be imprisoned could afterwards be filled up.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> "Mon Henri quatre, mon Zaire,  
Et mon américaine Alzire,  
Ne m'ont valu jamais un seul regard du roi:  
J'avais mille ennemis avec très-peu de gloire.  
Les honneurs et les biens pleuvent enfin sur moi  
Pour une farce de la faire."

years later to the abbé Duvernet he says : " They who have told you that in 1744 and 1745 I was a courtier, have spoken a lamentable truth. I was so ; I reproached myself with it in 1746, and I repented in 1747. Of all the time I have lost in my life, it is undoubtedly this that I most regret. It was not the time of my glory, if I ever had any." Added to his disgust with the court, Voltaire was troubled about this time by the desertion of the marquise du Châtelet, who had for some years been his mistress, but who now preferred the society of a younger and handsomer man, Saint Lambert. Moreover, another of his works drew down the censure of the authorities—*The Voice of the Sage and of the People*, wherein he maintained the rights of the state against the privileges of the corrupt clergy. Despairing at last of living with satisfaction in Paris, he listened to the temptations held out to him by Frederick of Prussia ; and on the 28th of June 1750, he quitted the capital, to which he only returned to die, eight-and-twenty years later. The king " was well enough convinced," says Voltaire in his *Memoirs*, " that his verse and prose were far above my prose and my verse, so far as their matter was concerned ; but he thought that, in respect of form, I might, in my capacity as an academician, give a certain rounding-off to his writings ; there was no flattering seduction which he did not employ to make me come. How was I to resist a victorious king, a poet, musician, and philosopher, who made a show of loving me ? I believed that I loved him."

The court of Frederick at Sans Souci was already the home of men like Maupertuis, la Mettrie, d'Argens, Chasot, Lord Tyrconnel, Pollnitz, and Algarotti ; but it was the sojourn there of Voltaire which has given most notoriety to the assemblage of philosophers and flatterers who hovered about the person of the royal dilettante ; concerning whom perhaps Jean-Jacques-Rousseau has recorded the fairest and best-deserved

judgment :—"I cannot esteem or love an unprincipled man, who tramples upon all laws, who does not believe in virtue, but regards it as a lure wherewith to amuse fools." During this period of his life Voltaire wrote many of his second-rate plays, a number of treatises, historical, satirical, and critical, including the *Diatribes concerning Doctor Akakia*, and a *Reply from an Academician of Berlin to an Academician of Paris*, which elicited a rejoinder on the part of Frederick himself, in defence of Maupertuis, whom Voltaire had attacked.<sup>1</sup> From this time a coolness sprang up between the unequally yoked friends. In the end Voltaire left Prussia, but was arrested in Frankfurt, and imprisoned in an hotel, by order of the arbitrary king, until he had returned a volume of the latter's poetical effusions. On his release he left Germany in disgust, in the year 1753, after a residence there of something over three years.

By this time Voltaire was a rich man,<sup>2</sup> and he could afford

<sup>1</sup> Maupertuis, President of the Berlin Academy, had undoubtedly done enough, by his alternate ineptitude and harshness, to arouse Voltaire's antipathy. Amongst other things, he was an ardent vivisectionist. In his letter on the progress of the sciences he writes : "I should be glad to see the life of criminals made servicable in these operations, however little hope of success there might be in it ; but I believe that one might, without scruple, sacrifice it for knowledge of more extended usefulness. Perhaps we might make many discoveries concerning that marvellous connection of soul and body, if we dared to go in quest of the links in the brain of a living man. Let us not be moved by the appearance of cruelty which some might think they could perceive in this : a man is nothing compared to the human species ; a criminal is even less than nothing." Another vivisectionist of the same age was the abbe de Saint-Ellien. The Duchess of Aiguillon said to him one day : "How can you, who are fond of cats, be so cruel ?" Whereto the physician : "Madam, there are inferior cats for these sorts of experiments." Frederick consoled Maupertuis for the *Diatribes* in his own peculiar style : "Mettez votre esprit en repos, et ne vous souciez pas du bourdonnement des insectes de l'air. . . . Vous n'avez à appréhender que la mauvaise santé."

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire had learned, while in England, that riches mean generally independence. He made money by taking with a company all the shares of a lottery, by which they realised a million of francs. In 1753 and 1754 he took, by the advice of the financier, Paris-Duverney, a share in the contract for pro-



to wait until he met with an asylum entirely to his mind. He bought an estate near Geneva, on neutral ground, which he called *les Délices*; a house at Lausanne, for the winter season; and, in 1758, he bought and settled down at Ferney, in France, on the borders of Switzerland. From the moment when he gave up dancing attendance upon kings and courts, he began again to produce work more worthy of his genius. The productions dating from the last and most fertile period of his life are very numerous. They include the *Chinese Orphan* (*l'orphelin de la Chine*), *Socrates*, *Tancred*, the *Scotchwoman* (*l'Ecossoise*), *Saul*, *Olympia*, the *Triumvirate*, the *Scythians*, the *Fire-worshippers* (*Guèbres*), the *Laws of Minos*, and *Irene*, amongst his plays; the *Pucelle*, an obscene, poor, and dreary attempt at an epic, which was received with enthusiasm by his contemporaries, and which, in fact, had been lying half-finished in his desk. Amongst his shorter poems and satires we have the *Poor Devil*, the *Russian in Paris*, *Vanity*, his *Epistles to Boileau*, to the *Emperor of China*, to *Horace*, etc., which contain some of Voltaire's happiest efforts. Of his prose works, the *Essay on the Manners and the Spirit of Nations*, wherein his English sympathies are again clearly manifested, appeared in 1756; and this was followed by his *Philosophical Dictionary*, a *Philosophy of History*, a *History of Parliament*, a *Treatise on Tolerance*; and his tales, including *Candide*, *l'Ingénu*, the *History of Jenny*, and the *Voyage of Reason*. At the same time he wrote numberless polemical

viding the army of Italy with provisions, which brought him about 800,000 francs. From 1733 to 1746 he was a partner of a M. Dumoulin, a large corn-dealer, who sent for his grain to Barbary; in 1743 he joined Marchand, a relative of his, in furnishing ten thousand uniforms to the militia. Voltaire and the abbé Moussinot dealt in pictures; he had shares in several vessels trading with Cadiz and with the East Indies; he had lent money to several princes and noblemen, for which he received an annuity; and on the 13th of February 1745 he inherited, through the death of his brother, 200,000 francs. It is said that, whilst living at Ferney, Voltaire had a yearly income of about ten thousand pounds sterling.

tracts, of great force and sense, besides keeping up a correspondence, of which the extant letters alone fill many volumes.

For a long time Voltaire had wished to return to Paris, and on the 10th of February of the year 1778 he did return there. He received many visits and invitations from the highest nobility and from his admirers, attended the rehearsals of his *Irene*, and was present at the sixth representation of that tragedy at the Théâtre Français, where he received a perfect ovation, and where his bust was crowned upon the stage amidst the applause of the spectators. But all this bustle was too much for a man who was more than eighty-four years old, and he died on the 30th of May of the same year.

It may be interesting to give here a sketch of Voltaire and of his way of living, taken by an Englishman, one of his contemporaries, and who "had frequent opportunities of conversing with him :"—

"The first idea which has presented itself to all who have attempted a description of his person is that of a skeleton. In as far as this implies excessive leanness, it is just; but . . . the most piercing eyes I ever beheld are those of Voltaire, now in his eightieth year. His whole countenance is expressive of genius, observation, and extreme sensibility. In the morning he has a look of anxiety and discontent; but this gradually wears off, and after dinner he seems cheerful:—yet an air of irony never entirely forsakes his face, but may always be observed lurking in his features, whether he frowns or smiles. When the weather is favourable, he takes an airing in his coach, with his niece, or with some of his guests, of whom there is always a sufficient number at Ferney. Sometimes he saunters in his garden; or, if the weather does not permit him to go abroad, he employs his leisure hours in playing at chess with Pere Adam: or in receiving the visits of strangers . . . or in dictating and reading letters. . . . By far the greater part of his time is spent in his study; and whether he reads himself, or listens to another, he always has a pen in his hand, to take

<sup>1</sup> A Jesuit, who lived in Voltaire's house.

notes, or make remarks. Composition is his principal amusement. . . . When engaged preparing some new production for the press, indisposed, or in bad spirits, he does not dine with the company ; but satisfies himself with seeing them for a few minutes, either before or after dinner. . . . The forenoon is not a proper time to visit Voltaire. . . . Those who are invited to supper have an opportunity of seeing him in the most advantageous point of view. . . . When surrounded by his friends, and animated by the presence of women, he seems to enjoy life with all the sensibility of youth. His genius then surmounts the restraints of age and infirmity, and flows along in a fine strain of pleasing, spirited observation, and delicate irony. He has an excellent talent of adapting his conversation to his company."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Moore gives us also a picture of Voltaire's behaviour at the theatre :—

"A company of French comedians . . . have erected a theatre at Chatelaine . . . about three miles from the ramparts of Geneva. . . . The play begins at three or four in the afternoon, that the spectators may have time to return before the shutting of the gates. I have been frequently at this theatre. The performers are moderately good . . . but when I go my chief inducement is to see Voltaire, who generally attends when *Le Kain* acts, and when one of his own tragedies is to be represented. He sits on the stage, and behind the scenes ; but so as to be seen by a great part of the audience. He takes as much interest in the representation as if his own character depended on the performance. He seems perfectly chagrined and disgusted when any of the actors commit a mistake ; and when he thinks they perform well, never fails to mark his approbation with all the violence of voice and gesture. He enters into the feigned distresses of the piece with every symptom of real emotion, and even sheds tears with the profusion of a girl present for the first time at a tragedy. I have sometimes sat near him during the whole entertainment, observing with astonishment such a degree of sensibility in a man

<sup>1</sup> *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany*, by John Moore, M.D., 1780. Letter xxix. Third edition. The first edition appeared in 1778.

of eighty. This great age, one would naturally believe, might have considerably blunted every sensation, particularly those occasioned by the fictitious distresses of the drama to which he has been habituated from his youth. The pieces represented having been wrote by himself, is another circumstance which, in my opinion, should naturally tend to prevent their effect on him. . . . I should be glad, however, to see Voltaire present at the representation of some of Corneille or Racine's tragedies, that I might observe whether he would discover more or less sensibility than he has done at his own. We should then be able to ascertain this curious disputed point, whether his sympathy regarded the piece or the author."<sup>1</sup>

The temptation to linger over the life and opinions of Voltaire, beyond what is possible in such a work as the present, is very great. The significance of such a man in his generation, and his influence upon the generations which succeeded him, cannot easily be overrated. The philosophy of the revolution, so far at all events as it was confined to ideas, occupied so entirely the mind and heart of the lord of Ferney that it was impossible for him to contain it, or to abstain from preaching it on every opportunity, "through every outlet and every channel, by prose and poetry, by grand or fugitive verses, by the drama, by history, romance, pamphlets, discussions, treatises, brochures, by his dictionary, by correspondence, in public, in secret, so as to let it penetrate to every depth and in every soil."<sup>2</sup> His boast that he had done more in his time than Luther and Calvin was in one sense true enough; though indeed Luther and Calvin were amongst his own intellectual creators. His effect upon his age was as immeasurable as his activity; and it would be hard to set any limit to the authority exercised by Voltaire upon the France of the eighteenth century, which was so soon

<sup>1</sup> *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany*, by John Moore, M.D., 1780. Letter xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Taine, *Anglais Régnant*, bk. iv. ch. 1. J. Moore, *A View of Society and Manners in France, etc.*, Letter xxix.



after his death to translate his opinions into acts. To prove and illustrate this, step by step, would require perhaps as much space as is here devoted to the whole survey of French literature. We can only state in a summary way that Voltaire as a philosopher was no metaphysician, for, according to him "metaphysical writers are like minuet-dancers; who, being dressed to the greatest advantage, make a couple of bows, move through the room in the finest attitudes, display all their graces, are in continual motion without advancing a step, and finish at the identical point from which they set out;"<sup>1</sup> but he was a firm and convinced Deist;<sup>2</sup> a bitter enemy of all sorts of fanaticism, and what he thought to be Christianity; an ardent champion of tolerance, and a strenuous defender of the notion of an innate feeling of justice.<sup>3</sup> And now we must, in short, be content to take Voltaire's measure as a dramatist and a historian, and pass on from him to his fellow-workers.

The first and perhaps the best of Voltaire's plays, the *Œdipus*, is after the classical model of tragedy, to which alone the play-going public of his age, or such part of it as he then wished to satisfy, would listen. It was a style in which Racine had found no worthy successor—no one, that is, who could be purely tragic, purely classical, and at the same time elegant and dignified. Many had dared and attempted the task, La Motte amongst them, but none had been equal to it. Voltaire felt what he conceived to be an adequate inspiration; and he would have been still more justified in his confidence than he actually is, if he had not been tempted to mar the severe beauty of his creation by pandering, in however slight a degree, to the popular taste for high colouring and sensational glitter. The explanation of his

<sup>1</sup> See *les Cubales, les Systèmes, à l'Auteur du livre des trois imposteurs*. His *Candide*, though bitter and full of scathing irony, ends with a glorification of work, "Il faut cultiver notre jardin."

<sup>2</sup> See *La loi naturelle*.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Discours sur l'homme*.

weakness is simple : he wrote in and for the eighteenth century : he was to this extent moulded by his public. Approaching his task with every instinct of ambition, he selected for his subject one of the loftiest themes of Sophocles, which had been adorned or marred by many imitators ; he wrote simply, brilliantly, and with adequate force ; but he fell short of the almost religious gravity necessary for the worthy cultivation of a field on which even Racine thought himself incapable of challenging comparison with the Greek. Voltaire, there can be little doubt, imagined that he had at least equalled Sophocles ; though he himself came to admit that in introducing his retrospective love-scenes between Philoctetes and Jocasta, he had in some degree profaned his ideal. When the veteran scholar Dacier advised Voltaire to translate literally the choruses of Sophocles, the young poet laughed. He thought he was capable of something more than translation ; and he set to work by altering the Greek dramatist's plan. For Creon, whose cause of quarrel with Œdipus was in itself tragic—the murder of Œdipus' father—he substituted Philoctetes ; he banished the children of his hero ; he heightened the stage effect of the plot by reserving its dénouement ; he softened the violence of the tragic elements as they were physically exhibited upon the Greek stage ; and, in short, he continually kept before his mind the fact that he was writing for the elegant and fastidious court of the Regency. What could compensate for the substitution of a French Philoctetes, doting on a venerable reminiscence of love, in place of the grandly simple Creon, returning from Delphi crowned with laurels ? What could atone, in the mind of any one who has read the masterpiece of Sophocles, for the loss of his grandest choruses of lamentation, praise, and enthusiasm ? Certainly nothing which Voltaire has supplied in their place : certainly not the courtly harangues of Philoctetes, or the feminine loquacity of Jocasta. These are, it may

be, amongst the almost inevitable results of a modernisation of a lofty classical theme ; but it must be admitted that Voltaire's mode of treatment has rendered them more conspicuously unfavourable than they need have been. His best work was too good to be spoiled by the introduction of trivialities, against which his taste must have rebelled. Setting aside the comparison, we have in this play of Voltaire's a thoughtful and brilliant conception, admirably worked out. Nothing could be finer than certain parts of the chorus of Greeks, with its frenzied defiance of the cruel gods ;<sup>1</sup> or than the quiet dignity of despair with which Jocasta accompanies her death.<sup>2</sup> If he could always have been equally severe and dignified, he would have been entitled to a closer juxtaposition with Racine, if not with Sophocles.<sup>3</sup>

*Artémise* and *Marianne*, which succeeded *Œdipe*, were not well received ; and it was fortunate for the French stage and for Voltaire that the latter was exiled to England, and had to study Shakspeare, and some other English

<sup>1</sup> "Frappez, dieux tout-puissants, vos victimes sont prêtes :

O morts, écrasez-nous ; cieux, tombez sur nos têtes ;" etc.

<sup>2</sup> For instance :

"Au milieu des horreurs dont le destin m'opprime,  
J'ai fait rougir les dieux qui m'ont forcée au crime."

<sup>3</sup> Œdipus and Jocasta are overwhelmed by the discovery of the fatal secret which is to cost them both their happiness and life. The idea of the tragedy is seized : and with Sophocles nothing remains but to wrestle with the gods. Voltaire, on the other hand, continues to dally with the details of the past.

*Œd.* Dépeignez-moi du moins ce prince malheureux.

*Joc.* Puisque vous rappelez un souvenir fâcheux,  
Malgré le froid des ans, dans sa mâle veillesse,  
Ses yeux brillaient encor du feu de la jeunesse.  
Son front cicatrisé, sous ses cheveux blanchis,  
Imprimait le respect aux mortels interdits ;  
Et si j'ose, seigneur, dire ce que je pense,  
Laius eut avec vous assez de ressemblance ;  
Et je m'applaudissais de retrouver en vous,  
Ainsi que les vertus, les traits de mon époux.

See Villemain, *Tableau de la littérature au dix-huitième siècle*, 4th Lecture, to whom I owe the comparison between the tragedies of Voltaire and Sophocles

dramatists, before he again took the ear of a French public. Amongst the plays which established his dramatic reputation after the year 1730, *Zaïre* was perhaps the best. Voltaire had not read *Othello* for nothing, although he did grievously complain of Desdemona's handkerchief. His inferiority to Shakespeare is no less marked in this drama than his inferiority to Sophocles was in *Œdipe*; though the comparison is not so strongly challenged. The hero of *Zaïre* is a jealous sultan, Orosmane, who is young, handsome, a powerful prince, the opposite in all things to Othello except his jealousy. In the end he discovers that the person whom he thought guilty was Zaïre's brother, Nerestan, but the discovery is made too late, for he has stabbed her, and nothing remains to the unfortunate lover except to avenge her by killing himself.<sup>1</sup> The jealousy of the sultan has no visible motive like Othello's, and is only based on a suspicious letter, whilst the Moor's has been diabolically fanned by Iago—a character wanting in *Zaïre*—and is kept up, and finally brought to a crisis by the very innocence and artlessness of Desdemona. The speech of *Othello* when he tells how he won Brabantio's daughter: "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, and I lov'd her, that she did pity them," is superior to Orosmane's speech to Zaïre about his politics, his plans for the future, the exploits of his ancestors, and his promise not to employ "these Asiatic monsters, insulting guardians of the seraglio of the sultans."<sup>2</sup> In how natural a way does Othello, when roused by Iago, answer Desdemona

<sup>1</sup> Of course Zaïre is killed, not in sight of the public, but behind the wings, crying out, "Je me meurs, O mon Dieu!" Orosmane, before stabbing himself, offers to Nerestan the odd present of

"Ce poignard, que mon bras égaré,  
A plongé dans un sein qui doit m'être sacré."

- <sup>2</sup> "Ne croyez pas non plus que mon honneur confie  
La vertu d'une épouse à ces monstres d'Asie,  
Du sérail des sultans gardes injurieux,  
Et des plaisirs d'un maître esclaves odieux.

*Act I. Scene 2.*



every time by asking for "the handkerchief;" but Orosmane, even after having read the letter to Zaïre, in which a secret meeting is appointed, says in the most polite manner that "if the invincible power of some other love" sways her, she should acknowledge it, and be pardoned that very moment, on condition of abandoning the insolent fellow who adores her.<sup>1</sup> And who can for one moment compare the last words of Desdemona, "Commend me to my kind lord; O farewell," with those of Zaïre; or the grand death of Othello, and his final speech, with the last utterance of Orosmane, who, after he has stabbed himself, with his dying breath recommends his followers "not to do any injury to Nerestan, but to lead him back"?<sup>2</sup> Let us admit, however, that if Shakspeare gave birth to the central idea of *Zaïre* all the rest is undoubtedly Voltaire's; and it is undeniably excellent. The episode of Lusignan, recognising in Zaïre and Nerestan his long-lost children, has a charm which will make Voltaire's tragedy perennial.<sup>3</sup> *Brutus* contains some reminiscences of Addison's *Cato*; the *Death of Caesar* is a fine study after Shakspeare and Corneille, but not equal to his masters; *Alzire*, *Zulime*, and *Tancrède*, might possibly be referred, in some slight degree, to another school of English drama. In all of these the hand of Voltaire works independently, and works, too, with a genius and skill essentially French. Here, as in everything else which he created, the innovation is above all manifest; and the plays which he wrote during the last period of his life, from the date of his settling at Ferney, were rather philosophical and moral harangues than success-

<sup>1</sup> "Si de quelqu' autre amour l'invincible puissance  
L'emporte sur mes soins, ou même les balance  
Il faut me l'avouer, et dans ce même instant,  
Ta grâce est dans mon cœur, prononce, elle t'attend.  
Sacrifie à ma foi l'insolent qui t'adore."

*Act IV. Scene 6.*

<sup>2</sup> "Respectez ce héros, et conduisez ses pas."

<sup>3</sup> See Villemain, already quoted, 9th Lecture.

ful productions of dramatic art. "After the Revolution Voltaire's plays were frequently acted; not so much, perhaps, on account of their dramatic merit as because they abounded in lines and couplets which a liberated people could applaud to the echo;—such, for instance, as these: "I am the son of Brutus, and I bear liberty and a horror of kings engraved in my heart." "The right of governing is not an advantage transmitted by nature like an inheritance." "Injustice ends by producing independence." "He who is born in the purple is rarely worthy of it. The first king was a lucky soldier." "He who serves his country well has no need of ancestry. Mortals are equal; it is not birth, but virtue alone which makes the difference." Occasionally, however, a slight change was necessary, even in the works of Voltaire, before they could please the gods of the Revolution. He had written, "To arrest a Roman on suspicions alone is to imitate kings; whilst we punish them." After 1792 this became, "To arrest a Roman on mere suspicion can be allowed only in time of revolution."<sup>1</sup>

Amidst all the variety of Voltaire's literary work, he entered into nothing more eagerly, and succeeded in nothing more genuinely, than his historical studies. I say advisedly studies; for in spite of all that has been said to the contrary, Voltaire was a laborious and conscientious historian, who both read and thought much before he sat down to write. His *History of Charles XII.* has been deservedly admired for its style, its easy grace and dignity of narration; and it is none the less admirable for its correctness and impartiality. The author does not sacrifice facts to effects; he writes brilliantly and yet soberly; if he is a poet, and at times a special pleader, he is still a philosopher and a critic, and he is never willingly unjust. It is true that his judgment is here and there at fault; notably in his *Age of Louis XIV.* perhaps

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 193.

one of the earliest of his historical conceptions, though it was not published until 1745. It was difficult for a young man of generous tendencies, born within the seventeenth century, not to be more or less dazzled by the splendours of that brilliant age, especially when he considered it as a whole, or perhaps more particularly in its earlier phases. Later in life Voltaire called the Augustan age "an age of great talents, far rather than of great lights." But he had been brought up in the ideas of the courtiers, and his early impressions in this respect retained much of their force, even until the close of his life. With all his courage and all his aspirations, in spite of all the emancipations of the eighteenth century, Voltaire's predilections were essentially monarchical; and his admiration for the Augustus of French literature is not so much out of harmony with the rest of his ideas as it seems to be. He appears to have longed for the advent of an aristocracy of philosophers and men of talent, for a perfect liberty in literature, but not to have cared greatly for political liberty.<sup>1</sup>

Let us not forget that he protected and gave a dowry to the grand-niece of Corneille; that he attacked the magistrates of Toulouse because they had burned to death Calas, a Protestant, falsely accused of having killed one of his sons who wished to become a Catholic, and that he never rested until he had rehabilitated Calas's memory; that he succeeded in snatching Sirven, another Protestant, accused of a similar crime, from the clutches of stupid and brutal judges; that he protested against the condemnation of Lally-Tolendal, whose memory was also finally rehabilitated; that he publicly denounced and wrote against the beheading of a boy of seventeen years old, la Barre, accused of having mutilated a cruci-

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire wrote in 1768: "What regards the people, they will always be stupid and barbarous. They are oxen which require a yoke, a goad, and some hay." But he calumniated himself and humanity when he wrote: "It is because one has been snubbed in a palace by an insolent domestic that one groans over the fields laid waste."

fix ; that he defended Madame Montbailly, unjustly accused of parricide, and who, through his strenuous efforts, was declared innocent ; and that, finally, he wrote manfully in favour of the serfs of Mount Jura. During the last years of his life he had become the arbiter of public opinion in Europe, and his colossal reputation has done him more harm than good with posterity. He is now generally recognised as a literary man of great talents, who was neither in morality nor in character better or worse than his contemporaries, but who possessed a heart filled with love for humanity, a pen which could make itself felt when it attacked an enemy or defended a friend, and who perhaps enjoyed the wielding of that pen more than was good either for his moral or literary dignity.

## § 2. VOLTAIRE'S ENEMIES

Voltaire's literary friendships and enmities would take long to narrate. Amongst the latter must be specified his antipathy to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It was a mutual dislike, which dated from their first meeting in Holland, and which may be put down to the instinctive jealousy of two strongly sensitive minds, over-much alike in their ill-restrained spirit of independence, and at the same time antagonistic in their breeding and natural characteristics. Elie-Catherine Fréron,<sup>1</sup> a pungent critic, a scholar, and a man of considerable solidity of mind, was a less eminent mark for Voltaire's satire. In 1745 he began his *Letters on Certain Writings of this Age*, in which he took Voltaire as the special subject-matter of his criticism. Nine years later these letters had expanded into the *Année Littéraire*, in which the Encyclopædists generally came in for a share of his attention. His friend and literary mentor, the abbé Desfontaines, had encouraged him to the task, and

<sup>1</sup> 1719-1776.



assisted him in this and other journalistic ventures, whereby they reaped for some time as much as fifty thousand francs a year. But Fréron was more conservative than the Government itself; and when Louis XV. died, and gave place to Louis XVI. and his ministry of philosophers, the privilege of the *Année Littéraire* was withdrawn. The news gave the editor an apoplectic stroke; and he died of it in the year 1776. He has been immortalised by Voltaire in a not very satisfactory satire in verse, *Le Pauvre Diable*; and in a comedy, *The Scotchwoman*, acted on the 26th of July 1760, which Voltaire pretended to have translated from the English, and wherein Fréron, under the name of Frélon (*Anglice* Wasp)—and at the representations under the name of Wasp only—figures as a spy and a scribbler who will do any dirty work for money. Fréron was himself present at the two first representations of the piece, and printed a few days afterwards an account of it in his paper, *l'Année Littéraire*, in which he took his revenge without insulting any one, and replied to Voltaire's attack by witticism. Fréron had certainly the best of it. This play was remodelled for the English stage by Colman, and had some success as *The English Merchant*. Freeport, a benevolent English merchant, is one of the heroes of the piece. Fréron is called Spatter, and the piece is dedicated to Voltaire, and was acted in the month of February 1767. Voltaire never ceased to wage war against Fréron, and to attack him in epigrams which are more bitter than witty.<sup>1</sup>

Gilbert<sup>2</sup> has left a deeper mark on the literature of his

<sup>1</sup> We give one as a specimen :—

“ L'autre jour au fond d'un vallon,

Un serpent piqua Jean Fréron,

Que pensez-vous qu'il arriva ?

Ce fut le serpent qui créva.”

An anecdote is also told how a gentleman, walking with Voltaire in the latter's garden, saw a toad, and, in order to please Voltaire, said, pointing at the animal, “There is a Fréron.” “What can that poor beast have done to you,” replied the wit, “to deserve such a name?”

<sup>2</sup> 1751-1780.

age than Fréron. The son of a peasant, weak in body and easily hurt in mind, he had a soul above his birth and training, and contrived to reap in the capital a fair meed of reputation. Voltaire nowhere so much as mentions him; though he often wrote and spoke against Voltaire, as well as against others of his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> Gilbert, though he died at the age of twenty-nine, has left works that still live; and especially a couple of satires, *The Eighteenth Century* and *My Apology*: bitter, vengeful, and forcible productions, more distinguished for their matter than their manner. Another of the butts of Voltaire's energetic and often spiteful contempt was the marquis Le Franc de Pompignan,<sup>2</sup> a lyrical poet of some sweetness, and a prose writer not to be despised, who enjoyed the friendship of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, the poet. He was a man worthy of friendship, whatever may be thought of his literary merits; but he annoyed Voltaire by protesting, in his speech as a member of the Academy, with the earnestness of an ardent Christian, against the tendencies of the innovating philosophy of the age. Pompignan was in fact a man of considerable courage, and went so far as to make representations to the king himself concerning the miseries under which the people were groaning. Unfortunately he was very pompous in his style, and preached in solemn tone when he should have been satisfied with the part of an essayist or a satirist. Voltaire took him at his weakest, and slew him with ridicule.<sup>3</sup> "L'ami Pompignan" wrote some passable "sacred poems," which his tormentor said were so sacred that nobody would touch them; a drama on the subject of *Dido*, which had some success; and an ode on the

<sup>1</sup> Thus he speaks of d'Alembert:

"Ce froid d'Alembert, chancelier du Parnasse,  
Qui se croit un grand homme, et fit une préface."

<sup>2</sup> 1709-1784.

<sup>3</sup> "César n'a point d'asile où son ombre repose,  
Et l'ami Pompignan pense être quelque chose."—*La Vanité*.

death of his friend Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, in which there are some really fine stanzas. He was also a good classical and English scholar, and translated into French the *Universal Prayer* of Pope and some scenes of Shakspeare.

Another of the victims of Voltaire's satires was Jean-Baptiste Gresset,<sup>1</sup> an emancipated Jesuit, who wrote verses not unworthy of a comparison with those of his satirist, and who was, at the same time, a dramatist and a didactic poet. His tragedies of *Edward III.* and *Sidney*, and his comedy of *Le Méchant*, were perhaps not much read outside the circle of his friends; but the latter is at least worth reading. He had hardly completed it when he wrote a letter in condemnation of the stage; whereupon Voltaire assured him that he had no cause for self-reproach, and that he was unjustly accusing himself when he regretted having written a comedy. His poems of *La Chartreuse*, *The Living Lute*, one or two letters in verse, and, above all, his poem, *Vert-Vert*, obtained him no little celebrity in his generation. Vert-Vert was a parrot, who lived in clover in a convent at Nevers, and was famous for its pious utterances, but who picked up some naughty words when on its travels to another convent, to the great horror of the nuns, anxious to listen to its devout exclamations.

Charles Palissot de Montenoy,<sup>2</sup> generally known as Palissot, was, if not a personal enemy of Voltaire, at least very hostile to his friends and admirers; though indeed his pen was at the service of any great men who would accept his flattery and remunerate his services. He wrote a comedy, *Le Cercle*, in which he abused Jean-Jacques Rousseau in such a style as to disgust even those who held the latter most cheaply. He wrote offensive adulations of Voltaire until the latter gave him to understand that his attentions were not appreciated; and then he offered his pen to Fréron. His

*Little Letters on Great Philosophers*, in which Diderot is fiercely attacked, are smart and entertaining, but manifestly insincere. His comedy *The Philosophers* (1760) was very successful. His *Dunciad* is a stupid and monotonous imitation of Pope's. To the literary student his name recalls nothing so vividly as a *bout-rimé*<sup>1</sup> which Marmontel made at his expense, and which sufficed to overwhelm him with ridicule.<sup>2</sup>

There were certain names that had the privilege of goading Voltaire to fury when they were mentioned; such was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's; other names he used as a grinding-stone upon which he sharpened his teeth. Such were those of Patouillet,<sup>3</sup> Nonnotte,<sup>4</sup> and Angliviel de la Beaumelle.<sup>5</sup> The two former were ex-Jesuits; they had attacked Voltaire, and their names have been transmitted to us by Voltaire's revenge. This revenge was complete; never did he lose an opportunity

<sup>1</sup> For *bouts-rimés* see vol. ii. bk. iv. ch. vii. § 3.

<sup>2</sup> " Le poëte franc	gaulois,
Gentilhomme	Vendômois,
La gloire de sa	bourgade,
Ronsard, sur son vieux	hautbois,
Entonna la	<i>Franciade</i> .
Sur sa trompette de	bois,
Un moderne auteur	maussade,
Pour lui faire	paroli, <sup>1</sup>
Fredonna la	<i>Dunciade</i> .
Cet homme avait nom	Pali :
On dit d'abord Palis	fade,
Puis Palis fou, Palis	plat,
Palis froid et Palis	fat ;
Pour couronner la	tirade
En fin de	turlupinade,
On rencontra le vrai	mot :
On le nomma Palis	sot.

*Envoi.*

M'abaissant jusqu' à toi, je joue avec le mot ;  
 Réfléchis, si tu peux, mais n'écris pas . . . lis, sot."

<sup>3</sup> 1699-1779.

<sup>4</sup> 1711-1793.

<sup>5</sup> 1727-1773.

<sup>1</sup> *Faire paroli* is to stake the double of what was staked before.



of pouring his most scalding contempt over these luckless priests. In Angliviel de la Beaumelle Voltaire had a more serious and worthy detractor. He was a writer of considerable distinction ; in many things he was far more liberal than even Voltaire. He and Voltaire met at Berlin ; and it was there that the latter took offence at some of Beaumelle's opinions. Whether his hatred was justly or unjustly founded Voltaire was never known to forgive ; and he silently pursued Angliviel with his satires, nay, with his insults and calumnies, up to the last day of his life. His enmity was not only expressed in writing ; it is said on good authority that he was chiefly responsible for Angliviel's imprisonment in the Bastille. Voltaire was not the tenderest of men ; if some of his contemporaries dealt hardly with him, he had his turn, and made the most of it.

The abbé Guyot Desfontaines,<sup>1</sup> whose name we have mentioned before, was another of Voltaire's "intimate" enemies. Their quarrels at one time attracted the attention of Europe. Voltaire in this case, it must be said, was right : Desfontaines was indebted to him for a very great service ; he was imprisoned under an infamous charge, and it was Voltaire who obtained his release and saved him from certain disgrace and ruin. This kindness Desfontaines recognised by attacking his benefactor's works. The indignant Voltaire thereupon prepared his sharpest arms, rushed upon the unfortunate abbé, and although the latter at first offered some spirited resistance, he was eventually beaten down and annihilated. Desfontaines, be it said in passing, was anything but an ordinary man. He was clever as a polemist, and his translations of *Gulliver* and the *Æneid* are still held to be valuable works of their kind.

Another sworn adversary of Voltaire was Alexis Piron,<sup>2</sup> one of the second-rate playwrights of the eighteenth century ;

<sup>1</sup> 1685-1745.

<sup>2</sup> 1689-1773.

but who, being extremely witty, knew the weak points of Voltaire, and not unfrequently made him smart under the lash. Alexis Piron was the son of a Burgundian poet of some distinction. He was first noted for his *bons-mots*, which were extremely pungent. He then took to stage writing, and in two or three instances succeeded in producing plays of the highest quality. Such, for instance, was his comedy, the *Métromanie*. Piron became one of the *collaborateurs* of Le Sage; and they jointly produced for the Théâtre de la Foire numerous pieces, of which the titles have barely reached us.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. THE ENCYCLOPÆDISTS.

THE object of an encyclopædia is to collect the erudition scattered over the face of the world, to expound its general system to the men with whom we live, and to hand it down to the men who shall come after us ; so that the labours of past ages may not have been useless labours for the ages which succeed, that our descendants, becoming better informed, may at the same time become more virtuous and more happy, and that we may not die without having deserved well of the human race."

Such were the words of those who, about the middle of the eighteenth century, conceived the idea of the *Encyclopædia*; a methodical (*raisonné*) "*Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades.*" A Parisian publisher, desiring to have a translation of Chambers's *Cyclopædia*,<sup>1</sup> applied to a young and comparatively unknown man, Denis Diderot,<sup>2</sup> to perform the labour. Diderot, full of spirit and ambition, was not satisfied with the dry and limited English work, and conceived the plan of one which should be somewhat similar in design, but vaster and more comprehensive. He opened his idea to d'Alembert,<sup>3</sup> young like himself, but already well known as a mathematician, who looked favourably on the scheme ; and together they set themselves to the task. In 1746 they obtained their license to print ; Diderot drew up the prospectus, d'Alembert wrote the plan of the work. Large numbers of subscribers supported an idea which promised to reflect such

<sup>1</sup> Published 1728.<sup>2</sup> 1713-1784.<sup>3</sup> 1717-1783.

great credit on the nation and the age. Many of the best writers of the day tendered assistance; Voltaire wrote several of the articles; Montesquieu and Buffon co-operated with the young editors; Malesherbes and Turgot lent their aid. Even the Jesuits, and the few Jansenists who still existed, offered to share in the toil; but their help was politely declined.<sup>1</sup> It would have been well if those responsible for the contents of the *Encyclopædia* had exercised discrimination amongst their friends as well as amongst their enemies; for the articles are very unequal, some of them being at once weak and declamatory—such, for instance, as the abbé Mallet's *Hell*, the effort of writing which, it has been maliciously said of him, he was not able to survive. Diderot, the editor, seems to be apologising for this unevenness, in his own article "Encyclopædia," when he says that such a work "could only be attempted in a philosophical age, because it demands throughout more boldness of spirit than one usually has in the pusillanimous ages of Taste." In religion a compromise was apparently made with orthodoxy; or, at all events, the religious articles are written with the same freedom on the orthodox side as on that of innovation. In philosophy, the English modern authorities are most in favour, Locke and Newton being preferred to Descartes; for Condillac had followed Voltaire in familiarising Frenchmen with the ideas of their neighbours. In the history of philosophy Diderot was himself the principal spokesman, until Voltaire came to his assistance after his return from Berlin; and he contrived, skilfully enough, to compensate for the freedom accorded to the literary abbés who wrote about religion.<sup>2</sup> Read what Diderot says on the score of Diogenes :—

<sup>1</sup> The Jesuits had a work of their own in the market, the *Dictionary of Trévoux*, and their object in undertaking to assist a rival speculation is perhaps open to a little curious surmise.

<sup>2</sup> There were four of these up to 1758. D'Alembert writes to Voltaire :—  
"The abbé Morellet is a fresh and excellent acquisition which we have made ;



“So much we owe to truth and to the memory of this unclean but very virtuous philosopher. Little minds, animated by a base jealousy against all virtue which is not confined to their own sect, will be only too eager to tear to pieces the sages of antiquity, without our assisting them. Let us rather do what honour and philosophy require of us ; let us protest against these imbecile talkers, and try to raise again, if possible, in our writings the monuments which gratitude and veneration had erected to the ancient philosophers, which time has destroyed, and the memory of which superstition would now abolish.”

Allusions of this sort were not missed by the bigots of the eighteenth century ; and one of them, Abraham Chaumeix, wrote eight volumes of *Legitimate Objections to the Encyclopædia*. In politics, Diderot and his associates were of the school inaugurated by the *Spirit of Laws*, only still more pronounced than Montesquieu in favour of popular sovereignty. They recognised the dignity of the citizen as compared with the courtier, defining the latter as belonging to “a kind of folk whom the misfortune of kings and peoples has set between kings and the truth, to prevent the latter from reaching them.” In science, which d’Alembert made his peculiar care, the Encyclopædists were severely scientific, at the same time that they were clear and accurate, the articles on scientific subjects being copiously illustrated by woodcuts. In literature, Marmontel, Mallet, de Jaucourt, Dumarsais, and others, wrote according to their lights ; that is, with little originality and no great spirit. The science of literary criticism was not yet mastered ; and, if we except the grammatical articles of the last named and of Beauzée, the technical contributions of the *Encyclopædia* to the history and method of letters were inconsiderable. The opposition of those whose mouthpiece Chaumeix had made himself caused the revocation of the

he is the fourth theologian to whom we have had recourse since the commencement of the *Encyclopædia*. The first was excommunicated, the second exiled, the third is dead ;”—and Morellet was put into the Bastille two years later.

permission to publish the gigantic work which was issued to the public. After a suspension of six years, between 1759 and 1765, it was continued, and brought to a conclusion in 1771 ; although a supplement of half-a-dozen volumes appeared six years later.

Diderot had to bear the brunt of the objections and jealousies which were aroused by the *Encyclopædia*. Marmontel, Condorcet, Morellet, lived to enter the Academy ; Turgot and Malesherbes, after they had become ministers of France, found means to reward several of their former colleagues ; but Diderot received no honour or reward for his pains. It was, perhaps, to a great extent, his own fault ; he was not sufficiently prudent ; and, having to bear on his own shoulders the odium contracted by each and all of his fellow-workers, he was too much out of favour with the authorities of court and church to obtain or expect reward. His life was devoted to his work ; he survived it by less than fourteen years ; and he died almost as poor as he had lived. His publisher, Lebreton, had made his fortune by the *Encyclopædia*, in spite of having substituted his own platitudes for many of the boldest and best expressions of his literary clients ; but Diderot was in the meantime selling his books to Catherine of Russia in order to maintain himself. She left him the use of the library, and gave him, as her librarian, a salary of a thousand francs per year, for which she afterwards substituted a present of fifty thousand francs. He went to see her in Russia, and was well received ; and after his return to Paris, when he was dying in his old humble quarters, Catherine insisted upon having him moved to grand apartments in the Rue Richelieu, where he only lived twelve days. This was almost the only gleam of prosperity which Diderot saw, in an age when literature certainly cannot be said to have generally gone without its reward. His life had been a chequered one, apart from the ingratitude of others ; and it was not

always of others that he had to complain. He deserted his wife and daughter three years after his marriage; then he returned to them, covering himself with reproaches; and then took again another mistress. He quarrelled with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, after being on intimate terms with him;—which, indeed, may not have been attributable entirely to his own inconstancy. He played himself false, even with his pen, more than once or twice writing utterly beneath his powers; though he may have been unable at the moment to pay a better price for his bread and cheese. He wrote two poor dramas, *The Father of the Family* and *The Natural Son*, in which he painted all the sordidness of his own existence; an *Essay on Merit and Virtue*, his first work, which displays the weaknesses and the enthusiasm of a religious bigot; a *Letter on the Blind*, in which he is completely emancipated, and advocates the opposite side of what he maintained in his first essay, and which procured for him the honour of a sojourn at the castle of Vincennes; and a couple of volumes on the *Exhibitions of Pictures (Salons)* strung together in seventeen days for his friend Grimm, one of the most readable of his works. He was sixty when he wrote these sketches, which reveal a surprising artistic taste, a dash, vigour, and enthusiasm for ideal beauty that one would scarcely have expected from the editor of the *Encyclopædia*. Over the quaint and life-like interiors of his friend Greuze especially he goes into ecstasies, and evolves page after page of social philosophy from the text where-with the canvas has supplied him. He also published two novels—*Jacques the Fatalist*, a series of tales and conversations between Jacques, his master, and the landlady of a public-house; and *The Nun*, which aims at depicting the evils of nunneries, but with an absolute disregard of common decency. The best work of his later days is an *Essay on the Reigns of Claudius and Nero*, filled with declamations and

digressions, and even containing a history of the quarrel between Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau ; but which is no bad eulogium on Seneca.

D'Alembert,<sup>1</sup> "the man who wrote a preface," according to Gilbert, is known to us by still better titles than the preliminary discourse of the *Encyclopædia*, though that is sufficiently large and philosophic in its views to earn him a reputation. As a mathematician he has left his mark upon his age ; as a writer he was, if not brilliant or ornate, at least sound and dignified. He had been trained in a hard school ; circumstances and intellectual tendencies combined to make him, as he has been called, the Stoic of the eighteenth century. The son of Madame de Tencin and Destouches, an officer of artillery, he was heartlessly deserted, and in fact exposed to die on the steps of the church of Saint-Jean-le-Rond ;<sup>2</sup> but he was given to nurse to a poor woman, whom he always persisted in regarding as his mother. In his autobiography he describes himself as "Jean le Rond d'Alembert, of the French Academy, the Academies of Science of Paris, Berlin, Petersburg, etc. etc., born at Paris on the 16th of November 1717, of parents who abandoned him at his birth." He never complained of the position to which nature seemed thus to have condemned him. Only once he gives expression to a feeling of cynical bitterness, when, after refusing the temptations held out to him by Frederick of Prussia and Catherine of Russia—the latter of whom offered him a salary of a hundred thousand francs as tutor to her son, he writes to Voltaire, "I shall remain in Paris ; there I shall eat bread and nuts, there I shall die poor, but there also I shall live free. I shall practise geometry and read Tacitus. If you only knew how sweet a refuge for idleness this geometry is ! And

<sup>1</sup> 1717-1783.

<sup>2</sup> Ten days after he was found his father, however, settled upon him twelve hundred francs a year.



then the fools do not read you, and consequently do not blame you, and do not praise you. Geometry is my wife, and I have established my household. M. de Maurepas (the minister) and Madame de Tencin have taught me how to do without place, fortune, and consideration." Consideration, however, he had in abundance. In 1772, eleven years before his death, he became permanent secretary of the French Academy.

D'Alembert's love-phase came late in life, and, consequently, with extraordinary vehemence. The object of his passion, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse,<sup>1</sup> played with him and deceived him ; but she left him on her deathbed a manuscript in which she confessed her various preferences. Most of these seem to have possessed the merit of being ten years younger than the lady, but certainly none of them had the qualities of mind by which their rival was distinguished.<sup>2</sup> D'Alembert scarcely recovered from the effects of his loss, heightened as it was by the remembrance of the manner in which he had been duped by her in whom his full trust had been reposed. After he died there was found amongst his papers abundant evidence of the severity of his grief. His later years were spent almost entirely at the Academy, where he was highly respected, and fulfilled his often delicate duties with equal tact and success. Amongst his literary productions, his laborious articles in the *Encyclopædia* should not be omitted. That on *The Court* is marked throughout by a vein of irony, such as enters more or less into the style of most French prose-writers of the eighteenth century when treating of the moribund government and institutions of their country. But this was not the natural or the best style of d'Alembert, who is, above all things, solid, argumentative,

<sup>1</sup> 1732-1776.

<sup>2</sup> David Hume, in a letter to Gilbert Elliot, September 22, 1764, says :—"I went to see Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who is really one of the most sensible women of Paris." This lady's passion-breathing letters to her last lover, M. Guibert, have been lately published, edited by M. E. Asse.

and precise. A more characteristic article is the one on *Geneva*, which, amidst an able treatment of the reformed church and of its history, took occasion to suggest that the church of Geneva had, during the past two centuries, gradually deserted the principles of Calvin for those of Servetus, and to advise the republic, in all seriousness, to establish a national theatre, by way of softening the manners of its morose population. The article raised a storm, not only in Switzerland but in France. Rousseau, himself a Swiss, took up the cause of his countrymen in a *Letter to d'Alembert*, full of ardour and declamation; and to this d'Alembert replied in cool and measured terms. Voltaire also expostulated with his friend and colleague on behalf of his adopted country; but d'Alembert would not retract a word. The French Government, could scarcely have felt much genuine sympathy in the Swiss cause; but it made a pretext of the quarrel to give expression to its growing jealousy of the *Encyclopædia*, which, in fact, was soon afterwards deprived of its privilege, not, however, before d'Alembert had withdrawn from it rather than be found at issue with any of his colleagues on a matter of principle. His essay on the *Destruction of the Jesuits*, and on the *Society of Men of Letters and of the Great*, are both in his best style; the latter being an admirably spirited contribution to what I may perhaps venture to call the literature of literature.

Marmontel,<sup>1</sup> the son of humble parents, to whose sacrifices he owed a liberal education, reaped his first success in the *Académie des Jeux Floraux* at Toulouse. Having gained three prizes for poetry, he sent his verses to Voltaire, who thought well of them, and obtained employment for the young man in Paris. In 1748 he wrote *Deeds the Tyrant*, a tragedy which was at once accepted. Mademoiselle Gaussin and Mademoiselle Clairon, two of the leading actresses of the time,

<sup>1</sup> 1723-1799.

fought for the rôle of Arétie, daughter of Dion, who reminds the reader of the *Æmilia* of *Cinna*. The piece succeeded, as did also *Aristomenes*; but *Cleopatra* was laughed off the stage, a fate which also befell the *Heraclides* and the *Funeral of Sesostris*. Meanwhile, Marmontel had already made many friends in the capital: from Madame de Pompadour to Madame de Tencin and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse; from men of the world like the duke de Choiseul, Bernis, and la Popelinière, to men of letters like Diderot, d'Holbach, Rousseau, and Grimm. In his earlier years, indeed, his social successes were greater than his literary successes. On one occasion, it is recorded in his own *Memoirs*, the king was "on the point of speaking to him;" and as reverence for the monarch was not incompatible in the men of the eighteenth century with a growing contempt for the monarchy, Marmontel could never forget the honour. He had given Louis a copy of his *Poétique française*, and the king, in order to reward him, presently granted him the privilege of issuing the *Mercur*, which was equivalent to a handsome income. Shortly afterwards he had experience of the danger to which the literary men of his age were especially liable. Suspected by the duke d'Aumont of writing some verses upon him, he was arrested and sent to the Bastille. Thence he emerged after eleven days' imprisonment as a thoroughly popular man. This was the period during which he wrote his best works; amongst them *Belisarius*, the *Incas*, and the *Moral Tales*, of which the morality is only in the title, were at once received into public favour. In 1763, upon the death of Bougainville, he was elected to the Academy. He also produced several operas, amongst others *Dido* and *Zemire and Azor*, and established his reputation as one of the most versatile writers of the century. General favourite as he was, he thoroughly identified himself with the new ideas; but the Revolution outstripped him, and in 1792 he was obliged to seek refuge

in Normandy. Here he died seven years later, leaving behind him a volume of *Memoirs* which are of considerable value for the social and literary history of his time.

Marmontel's works are not much read in the present day, and in fact they hardly deserve to be. The mark which he made on his century, if deep, was ephemeral; his ideas were light, and his ambitions not of the highest. The most philosophical of all his efforts, the moral and political romance of *Belisarius*, is vague, cold, and rather declamatory than powerful. That great general, whose eyes had been put out by order of the Emperor Justinian, wanders home, accompanied by a child who guides him, and scatters broadcast on his road his endless moral lessons. When he arrives at home, his wife dies of grief, but the old man continues his sermonising to young Tiberius, and even to the emperor himself, who comes to him incognito; he discourses about luxury, war, armies, the court, and, above all, on tolerance, like a philosopher of the eighteenth century and a pupil of Voltaire, with arguments such, as "Minds are not enlightened by the flames of the stake;" "The only point about which all parties are agreed is, that not one understands anything about what it dares to decide." Finally, the emperor is made a prisoner by the Bulgarians, and is delivered by Belisarius. He recognises his errors, and his heir marries Belisarius' daughter. The Sorbonne attacked and condemned the book, Voltaire defended it wittily. Many of the highest-placed personages of different states complimented Marmontel; Catherine of Russia had it translated into Russian for the edification of her subjects, who most probably, even if they could read, could not have understood it. Marmontel collected also the literary articles which he had published in the *Encyclopædia*, and which appeared as *Elements of Literature*; but there is very little that is either startling, new, or well told to be found in them. Two years before Marmontel's death he wrote a *Memoir*, to plead for the



free exercise of the Roman Catholic worship, then forbidden. "Thirty years after the publication of *Belisarius*, Marmontel became the advocate of those who had censured his work. Such an action redeems many faults of style."<sup>1</sup>

The tendency to materialism, if not the actual enunciation of the theory, so manifestly displayed in the writings of Diderot, was still more apparent in those of the less powerful and less eloquent Helvétius,<sup>2</sup> who composed an essay on *Mind*, for the express purpose of proving that matter was the only absolute existence. The transitory success of the book was due principally to the excitement of those who were scandalised by it. Rousseau was on the point of controverting so much of argument as Helvétius had addressed to the support of his thesis, when the Sorbonne unfortunately interfered with its merely *ex cathedra* refutation, and he held his hand. Unfortunately, I say ; because it would have been interesting to see how the great sentimentalist would have met the reasoning of Helvétius. The latter, and his friend the Baron d'Holbach,<sup>3</sup> from whose house their works were clandestinely issued, denied the necessity of assuming an immaterial force external to the bodily organs of man. Intelligence seemed to them to supply a spring of action sufficient to account for all the phenomena of thought ; or at all events no larger assumptions were made in order to bridge over the difficulties of their theory than were needed by those who maintained the existence of something beyond and above matter, and utterly foreign to the domain of human experience. The position is a strong one, enabling the besieged to turn against their enemies all the most powerful of their shafts ; and it has the great advantage of being founded upon phenomena, and of being assailable only by assumptions.

These bold doctrines were of course strenuously opposed

<sup>1</sup> Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 420.

<sup>2</sup> 1715-1771.

<sup>3</sup> 1723-1789.

by the majority of contemporary writers, although they were widely accepted amongst a large class of intelligent Frenchmen; and to this the high personal qualities of their enunciators contributed not a little. The same thing is true, in another sense, of Condillac<sup>1</sup> and his disciples. Condillac outdid Locke in the distinctness with which he referred all human powers to the influence of sensations upon a mind originally void of ideas. Given a receptive mind, possessing, if not rudimentary faculties, yet at all events consciousness and conceptivity; nothing more was needed, according to Condillac, to explain all the results of the ripened intellect than the innumerable seeds of sensational phenomena, germinating from the very moment of our birth. His followers, it is true, carried his theory beyond the point where he himself left off, and differed in little more than temperament from the cold materialism of d'Holbach.

Another collaborator of d'Alembert and Diderot on the *Encyclopædia* deserves a slight mention, the Marquis de Saint Lambert.<sup>2</sup> He was a favourite with Voltaire, which did not prevent him from ousting the latter out of the affections of Madame du Châtelet. He wrote a descriptive poem on the *Seasons*, after the manner of Thomson, as well as a number of smaller poems and fables, which were praised by his friends, and are now deservedly forgotten.

## § 2. THE MORALISTS.

Amongst the moralists of the eighteenth century who stood upon the ancient ways, and who continued, or rather ended, the line marked out by Pascal and la Bruyère, was Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues,<sup>3</sup> born of a noble family

<sup>1</sup> 1715-1780.

<sup>2</sup> 1716-1803.

<sup>3</sup> 1715-1747.

of Provence, in the year of Louis XIV.'s death. Dying at the age of thirty-two, he can hardly be said to have displayed his talents at their ripest, but, for all that, his life was a full one, and he wrote much. It was little more than two years before his death when he resigned his commission in the army, so that his literary work was but the fruit of the well employed leisure of an active man. He served in the Italian campaign of 1734, and in the Bohemian campaign of 1741-1742; but he had already acquired a reputation by his writings before ill-health compelled him to quit the service. Voltaire had been attracted by the good qualities displayed by the young marquis in his earliest attempts, and an interesting correspondence between the two remains to attest the warmth of their friendship. Vauvenargues was a literary critic of some acumen, though his judgments are not always such as have been confirmed by posterity. He has left behind him, in addition to his letters, a small volume of *Critical Reflections on several Poets*, and a number of *Imaginary Conversations*—between Pascal and Fénelon, Charron and Montaigne, Molière and a young man, Racine and Bossuet, and the like. His *Characters*, somewhat after the manner of la Bruyère,<sup>1</sup> no doubt suggested by la Rochefoucauld,<sup>2</sup> though without the latter's heartless cynicism, are piquant and often striking. Commonplace abounds, it must be confessed; but when no page is without its gem, we can afford the labour of sifting. There is point, and even wit, in much of Vauvenargues' wordiness; but his distinguishing features are gentleness, moderation, a belief in human nature, and in his own power to show it at its best.

Another of the later moralists, Duclos,<sup>3</sup> though somewhat older than Vauvenargues, was yet in a sense his pupil; for his mind ripened more slowly, and he lived a quarter of a

<sup>1</sup> See vol. ii. bk. v. ch. iv. § 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem.* See bk. v. ch. ii. § 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1704-1772.

century after the other. His principal work was a volume of *Considerations on the Manners of the Age*, which was translated into English and Dutch during the life of the author. He also wrote a *History of Louis XI.*, "a work," according to Daguesseau, "written to-day with the learning of yesterday." When Voltaire accepted the invitation of Frederick of Prussia, the post of historiographer-royal thus vacated was given to Duclos, who earned its emoluments by writing the *Secret Memoirs of the Reigns of Louis XIV. and Louis XV.*—personal reflections which did not give entire satisfaction to the authorities; and in 1766 he was advised to spend a few years out of France. He had previously been elected a member of the Academy; and on his return from Italy he was appointed its perpetual secretary. His literary ambition was great, and so was his success amongst his contemporaries; but posterity has somewhat detracted from his earlier repute. Beauzée,<sup>1</sup> who succeeded him at the Academy, pronounced his panegyric in high terms: Rousseau called him *un homme droit et adroit*: d'Alembert declared that he gave utterance to more wit in a certain time than any man he knew; but the present generation merely says that he is just readable, and that he is remarkably unequal both in matter and in style.

A rhetorician and a moralist who partly succeeded in reviving the manner of the Augustan classicism of France, a man who preserved the purity and loftiness of his ideas amidst the overflowing license of the eighteenth century, was Antoine Léonard Thomas,<sup>2</sup> who wrote a number of *Eloges* in a style of florid, rather declamatory, and yet elevated eloquence. If he is still read, it is more from curiosity than with zest; for he is a rhetorician pure and simple, and rarely rises to the height of philosophy. A pupil of the Jesuits, he had received a more liberal preparation for the world than was usual in that Society so long as the panegyrics of the "Grand Monarque" formed

<sup>1</sup> 1717-1789.<sup>2</sup> 1732-1785.



the staple of its historical teaching. He knew his age, but he was hardly of it; and in fact he is at his best on such topics as the eulogy of *Marcus Aurelius*, or at all events on some such work as the magnification of Peter the Great, in the *Pétreide*. Nothing is small to Thomas; he seems to imagine himself speaking in letters of gold; and the effect is wont to approach dangerously near the ludicrous. He was thoroughly out of his element in the eighteenth century, to which his stiff and ornate periods were not suited; and it must be admitted that he had not the force of genius, or even the gift of expression, necessary to take his fellow-countrymen by storm.

### § 3. BUFFON.

The step from metaphysical to physical science is a long and difficult one to take. The world's dogmas and theories have naturally been formulated with the greatest confidence, and have been most secure from contradiction or refutation, in those branches of human knowledge whose phenomena come less clearly before the eye of the multitude. The subject-matter of physics is within every man's reach, and it is dangerous for a half-instructed *savant* to lay down general maxims and to deduce universal laws which might be any day refuted by the accidental observation of the most ignorant. But in metaphysics every one can assert and assume, and no man—or only one in a hundred thousand—can conclusively prove the assumption to be wrong. Hence there were many great metaphysicians before there was a single great physicist; a whole library of ethical and mental science before one trustworthy book on natural history. The last century has done more for the science of matter than the previous thousand years had done for the science of mind;

and the naturalist of the eighteenth century must not be judged after the standard of the nineteenth. Measured by the Owens and the Huxleys of to-day, Buffon is little more than a pioneer in the most popular fields of natural history ; but, measured by the condition of natural science amongst his contemporaries, he was a *savant* of the highest order.

George-Louis Leclerc, count de Buffon,<sup>1</sup> born at Montbard in the Côte d'Or, applied himself at an early age to the study of science, and of mathematics in particular ; but when, in 1739, he was appointed superintendent of the royal gardens at Paris, his attention was at once directed to the channel in which his whole after life was to flow. For ten years he devoted himself to the phenomena of organised life, observing, compiling, and collecting ; and then he published the first part of the *Natural History* which he had conceived, but which he was not destined fully to accomplish. The whole reading world at once welcomed this fascinating narrative of the wonders and beauties of nature, which opened up so many and so grand vistas of novel interest. Buffon was already a member of the Academy of Sciences when the French Academy elected him unsolicited, at their next vacancy, in 1753 ; it was upon the occasion of the issue of his *History* that the king created him a count. Voltaire, who began by laughing at him, ended by doing him justice ; Jean-Jacques Rousseau admired both his matter and his style.<sup>2</sup> The Encyclopædists, on the other hand, who at first courted his assistance, discovered that he was too little in harmony with their advanced philosophic views ; and the connection terminated. The fame of the naturalist spread throughout Europe. An English privateer, having captured a vessel in which were a number of chests of specimens addressed to Buffon, scrupulously forwarded them to Paris. During his lifetime a statue was

<sup>1</sup> 1707-1788.

<sup>2</sup> He said, " C'est la plus belle plume du siècle."

raised to him in the hall of the Museum of Natural History, with this motto on the pedestal: *Naturam amplectitur omnem*, He embraces all nature.<sup>1</sup>

Buffon was, in fact, anything but a philosopher of the Encyclopædic order. A man neither of the future nor of the past, but of the present, he was happy in his generation, because he had chosen a career in which there was no strife, which roused no jealousies amongst those who were powerful enough to hurt him, and which enabled him to live a life of peaceful and congenial labour. His very labour was not hard, save in the overwhelming abundance of his materials. He did not attempt to classify, scarcely even to generalise; his aim was merely to describe, and to evolve from what he saw the grandeur, the beauty, and the harmonies of nature. He possessed an excellent style; and it is this, indeed, which gives to his writings their greatest charm. His *Discourse on Universal History* was accepted as a model of writing; and d'Alembert, if he said that Buffon was merely "the king of phrases," at least admitted that he was that. But he was that and something more. He produced before his death a *Theory of the Earth*, the *Epochs of Nature*,<sup>2</sup> and a *History of Minerals*. In his survey of natural history, properly so called, he completed the descriptions of man, of quadrupeds, and of the birds. If he had not done more, it was because he had no more time; but he did enough to show that, according to his light, he had at all events faced

<sup>1</sup> Whereunder a wit wrote: "He who embraces too much grasps too loosely." The hint was taken, and the motto changed to *Majestati nat:æ par ingenium*."

<sup>2</sup> He had, of course, many *collaborateurs*; and one of them, Guéneau de Montbelliard, wrote of him:

"O jour heureux qui vis naître Buffon,  
Tu seras à jamais chez la race future  
Pour les amis du vrai, du beau, de la raison,  
Une époque de la nature."

and attempted the conquest of a difficult domain of human knowledge.

Let us see what claim Buffon has to be considered as a man of science. Perhaps it would be more just to say that Buffon conceived ten thousand sciences, each one limited to the visible features and characteristics of an individual animal. His work was done when he had described the man, the tiger, the cat ; not only did he not attempt to discover their respective positions in the scale of nature, but he did not believe that any order existed amongst them of which the human mind need take cognisance. "Races, orders, and classes," he says, "exist only in imagination. . . . It is more easy, more agreeable, and more useful to consider things by their relations with ourselves than in any other point of view." Look at his classification of the quadrupeds. It begins with the horse, goes on to the ass, includes the ox, the sheep, the pig, and the dog. In another class the stag and the hare come side by side. Low down, apparently disgraced because of the cruelty of their instincts, we find the carnivorous animals. One day a friend proposed to him to verify a theory by having recourse to a crucible. "The mind," he replied, "is the best crucible." In botany, the labours of Linnaeus appeared to him as so much dry chaff, out of which nothing was to be gained, and he excluded the Swede's classification from the royal gardens.<sup>1</sup>

Manifestly Buffon's contribution to natural science, which stops short at the description of individuals, is of the most meagre kind. For the sake of his style we may perhaps forgive him the vanity which induced him to think that the world had nothing more to learn about a plant or an animal except what the Count de Buffon could tell it.

<sup>1</sup> Linnaeus took his revenge by giving the name of *Buffonia* to an ugly and malodorous flower.



## CHAPTER V.

## § 1. JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU,<sup>1</sup> of whom we have already heard something, and without frequent mention of whom the literary annals of the eighteenth century could not be written, occupies in the history of the great revolution of French ideas the same position as a social innovator and reformer that Voltaire occupies as an intellectual innovator, and that Turgot and Necker occupy as political innovators. More than either of these he represents that spirit of liberty tending to license, of enthusiasm tending to super-exaltation, of courage tending to excess, which marks all the great minds of his epoch, and which was destined, like a powerful leaven, to regenerate humanity by first revolutionising society. In this work Rousseau was before all his contemporaries ; more influential and effective than Montesquieu, than Diderot, and even than Voltaire. By his strong individuality, by his vivid conceptions, by his bold and picturesque ideas, by his close fidelity to nature, he stamped his impressions deeply in the plastic hearts of his countrymen and countrywomen, invading every rank and grade of the social scale, from the throne to the hovel, from the drawing-room and the cabinet to the *café* and the working-man's club. The effect of his direct appeal to natural conditions upon the unnatural and artificial society of the age was immediate and remarkable. "His sallies,

<sup>1</sup> 1712-1778.

his sarcasms, the harsh things of every kind which he addresses to the great, to men of fashion, to women ; his stern and cutting tone, shock but do not annoy. On the contrary, after so many compliments, insipidities, and poetical triflings, all this re-excites the blunted taste ; it is the sensation of a strong, rough wine, after a long indulgence in orgeat and candied citron. Thus his first discourse against art and letters had at once a very great success. But his pastorals touch the heart more deeply than his satires. If men listen to the scolding of the moralist, they throng around the magician who charms them ; women, above all, and young men, are devoted to him who lets them see the promised land. The whole accumulation of discontent, weariness of their present condition, *ennui*, vague disgust, a multitude of suppressed desires, gush out like subterranean springs of water, under the borings that for the first time bring them to light. These borings Rousseau struck deep and true, by good luck and through his genius. . . . What an outlet for restrained faculties, for the suppressed faculties, for the large and rich well-spring ever bubbling in the breast of man, and for which this pretty world has provided no issue ! A lady of the Court has been brought into contact with love as it was then carried on, a mere question of taste, often only a pastime, pure galantry, of which the exquisite polish ill conceals its shallowness, its coldness, and occasionally its wickedness : in short, such adventures, amusements, and characters as Crebillon the younger describes. One evening, as she is about to set out for the opera ball, she finds the *Nouvelle Héloïse* on her toilet-table ; it is not surprising that she keeps her horses and footmen waiting from hour to hour, and that, at four o'clock in the morning, she orders the horses to be unharnessed, and passes the remainder of the night in reading, choked with tears. For the first time in her life she finds a man who loves. And so, if you would understand the success of *Emile*, think of . . . the little

gentlemen embroidered, covered with gilt, tricked out, powdered, decked with sword and belt, their hats under their arms, bowing, offering to shake hands, rehearsing fine attitudes before a mirror, repeating phrases which they have learned by heart, pretty mannikins in whom everything is the work of the tailor, the hairdresser, the tutor, and the dancing-master; and by their side, little ladies, six years old, still more made-up, cased in whalebone, trapped in a heavy panier stuffed with hair and bound with iron, muffled in a head-dress two feet high, regular rouged dolls, whose mothers amuse themselves with them for a quarter of an hour every morning, to leave them to the maids for the rest of the day. These mothers rise from the perusal of *Emile*. No wonder if they immediately strip the poor little things, and resolve to nurse their next children themselves.”<sup>1</sup> Such were the effects produced by Rousseau upon the fashionable world. Judge how he must have affected others, whose minds were already open to the new influences of the eighteenth century.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born at Geneva. His mother died early; his father, a poor watchmaker, was descended from one of the French exiles who, in the earlier persecutions of the reformed church, fled for an asylum to the hospitable republican city; but he scarcely preserved the stern and uncompromising Calvinism of his ancestors, and seems to have been a man fond of pleasures, and caring little for his children. Jean-Jacques was, as a child, naturally shy and morose, feeble in body, but morbidly active in mind. He devoured all the books on which he could lay his hands, and derived from each the same lesson, the comparative worthlessness of arts and sciences, the absolute dignity and excellence of nature, the essential superiority of humanity to human society, and, in particular, the meanness and worthlessness of society as it then existed in France. He left,

<sup>1</sup> Taine, *Ancien Régime*, bk. iv. ch. 1. § iv.

when very young, his parents and his master, an engraver, wandered about; changed his religion; became a lackey; and, finally, a hanger-on to Madame de Warens, a lady who had abandoned her husband, her religion, and all ordinary notions of morality. In 1740 we find him acting in the capacity of a tutor at Lyons; subsequently, by the patronage of a friend, he became secretary to the embassy at Venice, and, later, a clerk in the office of a farmer-general of taxes in Paris. This post he relinquished in order to devote himself to what he felt to be his true vocation—that of a man of letters, or rather of a prophet penetrated by the belief that the one cure needed to restore the human kind to health was a recourse to the primitive lessons of nature. Be it observed, however, that throughout his life, amidst the infinite variety of his ideas, theories, and intellectual excesses, the Calvinist's son remained a genuinely religious man, to whom communion with the Deity was a constant necessity, who arrived at many of the conclusions of Voltaire and Diderot by methods widely different from theirs,<sup>1</sup> but who was far from being in harmony with the sceptical spirit of the age. Undoubtedly Rousseau was a fanatic in his creed, not orthodox according to any other man's conception of religious faith and duty; but he was genuine in his belief and simple in his sentimentalism; and this was precisely what the eighteenth century needed in its apostles.<sup>2</sup>

It was a character and a talent out of which much might have been made; but the education of Rousseau had been pitifully imperfect, and his reading, if it had been copious, had been chaotic. He tells us that, as soon as he could read, his

<sup>1</sup> Methods such as Pascal had in mind, when he said that "the heart has its reasonings which the reason does not recognise."

<sup>2</sup> Mr. John Morley in his review of *Taine's Histoire religieuse de l'Europe* (*The Review*, March 1876) says: "Rousseau was a Protestant; he was a native of the very capital and mother city of Protestantism, militant and democratic; and he was penetrated to his heart's core by the political ideas which had arisen in Europe at the Reformation."



father put novels in his hands, and read them page for page with himself. "Sometimes he (the father) heard the swallows in the morning, and said, 'Let us go to bed; I am more a child than yourself.'" And of the effect of this indiscriminate reading he says: "Thus began to be formed within me that heart, at once so proud and so tender, that effeminate but yet indomitable character which, ever oscillating between weakness and courage, between indulgence and virtue, has to the last placed me in contradiction with myself, and has brought it to pass that abstinence and enjoyment, pleasure and wisdom, have alike eluded me." So speaks the man of the boy of fifteen; and he speaks with an intimate knowledge of himself—a knowledge which he had made the constant aim of life. It is, in fact, from his own *Confessions* that we obtain most of what we know concerning his life—the bad as well as the good, and perhaps the bad even more than the good. In this remarkable book, full of obscene passages, the last portion whereof was written when he was about fifty-six years old, nothing whatever is concealed; and if we seem to hear too much of Rousseau from Rousseau, we remember that this candour and minuteness is an integral part of the man's nature and profession, which he displays himself only as he commends it to others. Listen to the best that he has to say on his own behalf, speaking of this very book of *Confessions*:—

"Let the last trumpet sound when it will, I shall come, with this book in my hand, before the sovereign Judge. I shall say openly: Here is what I have done, what I have thought, what I was. . . . I have shown myself as I have been, despicable and vile when I was so; good, generous, and sublime when I was that. I have uncovered my inner man, as Thou, eternal Being, thyself hast seen it. Gather around me the countless multitude of my fellow-creatures; let them hear my confessions, let them bemoan my unworthiness, let them blush at my miseries. Let each of them in turn uncover his heart at the foot of thy throne, with

the like sincerity; and then let one but say to Thee, if he dares: 'I was better than that man.'

The more commonplace record of his life, from the day when, in his thirtieth year, he came to Paris with fifteen louis and his comedy of *Narcisse* in his pocket, until the day when he died amidst the regrets of his adopted country, will not take long to recite. Received at once into the society of young men whom Dupin, d'Epernay, and other members of the new school of financiers loved to patronise, he made the acquaintance of Diderot, of Grimm, of d'Holbach, and Saint-Lambert. He led the life of a true Bohemian; but he was not long in obtaining the fame which he coveted. The academy of Dijon had offered a prize for the best treatise on the question: "If the re-establishment of sciences and arts has contributed to render morals more pure?" Rousseau tells us that he was on his way to visit Diderot in his prison at Vincennes, and had taken with him a copy of the *Mercur de France*, in which the announcement met his eye. "If ever anything," he says, "seemed like a sudden inspiration, it was the emotion produced by reading this. I suddenly felt my mind dazzled by a thousand lights; crowds of vivid ideas presented themselves at once with a force and confusion which cast me into an inexplicable agitation: I felt my head affected by giddiness like intoxication. . . . All that I could retain of these crowds of grand truths which, in a quarter of an hour, flashed upon me under that tree, has been very feebly scattered over my three principal works." He treated the question—it is alleged upon the suggestion of Diderot—from a negative point of view, and laboured to prove that arts, sciences, and letters had done more harm to mankind than was generally thought; that they gave to nations "the outward appearance of all virtues without possessing any;" that "the vile and deceitful uniformity of manners" prevents people "from showing themselves as they really are;" and

that "hatred and treachery will be continually hidden under the uniform and perfidious veil of politeness." He tries further to prove "that depravity becomes real and souls become corrupted according as sciences and arts have advanced towards perfection,"<sup>1</sup> and cites the examples of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Turkey, and China, to prove his case, and those of the early Persians, the Scythians, the Germans, the first Romans, and the Swiss,<sup>2</sup> to prove the contrary. He contrasts Sparta and Athens, quotes Socrates to prove that the scholars and artists of his time were conceited about what they knew, says that Cato thundered against the Greek philosophers and orators who introduced themselves into Rome; and mentions Fabricius telling the Romans "to overturn the amphitheatres, smash the statues, burn the pictures, drive away the slaves who corrupt them," in order to regain "the only talent worthy of Rome, namely, to conquer the world and to make virtue reign on earth." In the second part of his *Discourse* Rousseau says that "sciences and arts owe their origin to our vices;" for "astronomy has arisen from superstition; eloquence from ambition, hatred, flattery, and falsehood; geometry from avarice; physics from vain curiosity; all, and even morality, from human pride;" that sciences are vain in the object which they propose to themselves, and still more dangerous in the effects which they produce; that they are bred in idleness, and nourish it; that they undermine the foundations of belief, and destroy virtue. As regards literature and

<sup>1</sup> Honoré de Balzac in his preface to the *Comédie Humaine* says: "Man is neither good nor bad; he is born with instincts and aptitudes; society, far from depraving him, as Rousseau pretended, makes him more perfect and better; but interest develops also his bad inclinations. Christianity, and above all Catholicism, being . . . a complete system of repression of the depraved tendencies of man, is the greatest element of social order."

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Rousseau does not name the Swiss, but I suppose he means them by these words: "Telle enfin s'est montrée, jusqu'à nos jours cette nation rustique si vantée pour son courage que l'adversité n'a pu abattre, et pour sa fidélité que l'exemple n'a pu corrompre."

arts, they produce still worse evils; amongst others luxury, born of idleness and vanity, and "diametrically opposed to sound morality;" "dissolute morals, a necessary consequence of luxury, will be followed by a corruption of taste;" "true courage will become enervated, military virtues cease, and moral qualities diminish." "All these abuses arise because people ask no longer if a man is honest, but if he has talents; not if a book is useful, but if it is well written;" so that there are "natural philosophers, geometricians, chemists, astronomers, poets, musicians, painters; but no longer citizens." After some praise bestowed upon Louis XIV. and his successors for the establishment of academies, "which serve at least to bridle literary men," and a furious attack on philosophers, printing, and vulgarisers of science—which does not mean the Bacons, the Descartes, and the Newtons, he suggests that kings should admit to their counsels those who are the best able to give them good advice, tells ordinary people simply to do their duty, for there is no need to know more, invokes virtue, and ends thus: "Without envying the glory of these celebrated men who immortalise themselves in the republic of letters, let us endeavour to place between them and us that glorious distinction which was formerly observed between two great nations, that the one knew how to speak well, and the other how to act well."

The academy of Dijon crowned Rousseau's treatise,<sup>1</sup> and he found himself famous. Some time afterwards they proposed a further question: "What is the origin of the inequality amongst men, and is it authorised by natural law?" Encouraged by the notoriety which had resulted from the reply elicited to their previous question, they invited Rousseau to write upon this occasion also. He did it in a discourse which contains many of his best and most characteristic thoughts; but his ideas were so bold and so novel that ~~the~~

<sup>1</sup> 1750.



judges dared not crown his work, and they gave the barren honour to a certain abbé Talbert. The first of these academic discourses, and an opera entitled *Le Devin du Village*, played at court, at once raised Rousseau to an honourable notoriety. King Stanislas of Poland and several others wrote a rejoinder to his attack upon the arts and sciences; Voltaire went about asking his friends where the new man had come from; the literary society of Paris opened its arms to him, and he was welcomed as a champion of the enlightened age. For Diderot he wrote in the *Encyclopædia* an article on *Political Economy*, afterwards published in a separate form in Geneva, where his works soon became popular. From 1755 to 1765 he wrote steadily and at his best. It was in this decade that he gave to the world his *Emile*, his *Social Contract*, *Julie or the New Héloïse*, his *Letters* to d'Alembert and to Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris, his *Letters from the Mountain*, and the first part of his *Confessions*. By these he attained the height of his fame; the three first mentioned, together with the last, are and deserve to be the best known of all his productions, and had the greatest influence upon his contemporaries.

Rousseau dwelt for a short period at Neuchâtel; but he was not allowed to remain in peace there. In 1762 the Parliament of Paris formally condemned *Emile*. This was on the 9th of June; and on the 18th of the same month the "*magnifique conseil*" of Geneva was sufficiently hypocritical to imitate the example, although not a single copy of the work thus stigmatised had yet reached the town. The council went farther, and issued a warrant for Rousseau's arrest, contrary to the laws of the republic, which required that an accused author should first be heard in his defence. For the next six years Rousseau was involved in troubles arising out of the hasty injustice of the proceedings taken against him. He fled from France to Switzerland, from Yverdun to Motiers-Travers, and thence to the

island of Saint-Pierre in the midst of the lake of Bienné ; and it was from Motiers-Travers that he wrote his *Letters from the Mountain*, in rejoinder to certain *Letters from the Country*, in which he had been personally attacked. In these he asseverated the principles already put forth in *Emile* ; and his book was burned by the executioner. In 1765, driven from Bienné, he betook himself to Strasbourg, where he was well received ; and though he might have lived here without annoyance, or might, if he had wished, have availed himself of more than one invitation from abroad—amongst others from David Hume in England—he went back to Paris at the end of the year. Whilst at Motiers-Travers the Marshal de Luxembourg had sent him an Armenian's dress, which he wore until he came to the capital ; dispensing with it, according to a spiteful suggestion of Marmontel, because it failed to attract sufficient attention. In Paris he was fêted and ran after more than ever ; but he presently received a hint to depart. He had been staying at the house of the Prince de Conti, where he met Hume and Horace Walpole ; the latter of whom was attracted to Paris by his attachment to the marchioness du Deffand. Walpole and his friend conceived a poor opinion of Rousseau. Hume at least professed himself in a contrary sense, and had already arranged to take Rousseau back with him to England ; but he did not deny himself the pleasure of making a jest of the eccentricities of his friend.<sup>1</sup> In England Rousseau soon tired of the lionising to which he was subjected. He lived a retired life at Chiswick ; and whilst there he was induced to go to the theatre, in order to give George III. and the Queen an opportunity of seeing him.<sup>2</sup> After a visit to Wales, where he was offered an asylum by one of his hospitable friends, he accepted the use of a country

<sup>1</sup> Musset Pathay, *Œuvres complètes de J. J. Rousseau* (1828), vol. v. p. 216. David Hume was at that time private secretary to the Marquis of Hertford.

<sup>2</sup> *Pamela Corcoran*, *Life of David Hume*, London, 1829. Letter to the Marchioness de Barbantane, February 16, 1765.

house at Wootton, in Derbyshire, the property of Mr. Davenport; who, to avoid giving offence to Rousseau's sensitive mind, charged him a rent of thirty pounds a year. Writing from Wootton to his friend Madame de Boufflers (April 5, 1766), he says: "I am never less bored or idle than when I am alone. There remains to me, together with the amusement of botanising, a very pleasant occupation, to which I love more and more to devote myself every day. I have here a man of my acquaintance whom I have a great desire to know better. The association which I am about to form with him will prevent me from desiring any other. I esteem him sufficiently not to fear the intimacy to which he invites me; and as he is as much ill-treated by mankind as myself, we will mutually console each other for insults received, by reading each in the heart of his friend that he has not deserved them." This "man of his acquaintance" was Rousseau himself; and it was in his peaceful retreat at Wootton that he wrote the first six books of his *Confessions*.<sup>1</sup>

One can hardly be surprised that Jean-Jacques, in the morbid condition which produced his *Confessions*, should have quarrelled with Hume. Into the causes and circumstances of this quarrel there is no need to enter. The majority of French men of letters took part against their countryman; d'Alembert and Voltaire in particular. The lack of generosity and sincerity in Hume's treatment of Rousseau is no less unquestionable than the exaggerated character of Rousseau's suspicions of his former friend.<sup>2</sup> Most probably it was not this quarrel, but the contrivance of Thérèse Levasseur, to whom Rousseau had remained faithful without the conven-

<sup>1</sup> The first part of the *Confessions* was not published until 1781; the second, written at Trye, or in the Dauphiné, did not see the light until 1788.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Private Correspondence of David Hume*, London, 1820, Hume in a letter to the Countess de Boufflers, August 12, 1766, admits that he had written to Baron d'Holbach, but "little imagined that a private story, told to a private gentleman, could run over a whole kingdom in a moment."

tional bond of matrimony, and who was intensely wearied of her banishment from France, that caused his departure from Wootton and from England in something under seventeen months. Then he lived for some time at Amiens, with Gresset, author of the poem of *Vert-Vert*; and from thence removed to Trye, a castle of the Prince of Conti's, near Gisors, where he passed under the assumed name of Renou. Meanwhile his friends in Geneva had not been idle; and in 1768 the magistrates of that city rescinded their old warrant; but Rousseau did not return to his native land. After remaining for some time at Trye he travelled from place to place, and finally came once more to Paris, having, in the meanwhile, finished his *Confessions*; a few pages whereof he read before an audience consisting of the count and countess of Egmont, Prince Pig-natelli, the marchioness de Mesme, and the marquis de Juigné. Madame d'Épinay wrote to M. de Sartines, the minister of police, complaining that the *Confessions* compromised her; and Rousseau consented to read no more of them.

Rousseau was too little in harmony with his surroundings in the capital, and too genuine in his antipathy to the artificial side of existence, to remain long content with the part of "Parisian gentleman" which he had consented for a time to assume. He himself tells us with what a sense of relief he threw aside, before his greatest works had been written, the ridiculous costume of the "petit-maitre," with its sword, its fine linen, its sleeves and ruffles. He put on the dress of an artisan, he set himself at independence with the world, reducing his necessities and his expectations to the minimum, in order to raise his powers to the maximum. By way of earning bread and cheese, he copied music at so much a sheet; he closed his door to the idlers and the curious, to his former friends and his former patrons and patronesses. He bade adieu to the philosophers with greater pleasure than to any others; for, as I have said, his sympathy with them



had never been great, and he despised their methods as much as he shrank from their coldness and self-sufficiency. They had oppressed him long enough, and his *Letter to d'Alembert* was at once his resignation as an encyclopædist and a declaration of war.<sup>1</sup> Judge how the effect of his writings must have been increased by this utter repudiation of what he, in common with so many others, felt and professed to be a false position, but which he almost alone had the courage to renounce.

During the last years of his life Rousseau wrote little else except his voluminous correspondence. In 1772, however, he published his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, in the course whereof he advised the Poles "to contract their boundaries, for their neighbours might perhaps think of rendering them that service." Within four months the partition of that kingdom was an accomplished fact. A volume of *Dialogues*, and another of *Rêveries*, were the last of his published works. He died in 1778, at the age of sixty-six, not without suspicion of having himself contributed to his release.

Rousseau's life was that of a genius beyond dispute, if not beyond detraction. He had more enemies than any of his contemporaries, and he possibly deserved to have them. He was self-involved, often morosely jealous and suspicious, exacting more than his indifference would suffer him to repay; but at the same time there was no literary man of his age who made more friends, or retained them for a longer time. This, no doubt, was because he was judged differently from other men. He was cast in a mould wholly in contrast with that of d'Alembert, of Voltaire, or any of the men of the eighteenth century with whom we could compare him. He was before all things a sentimentalist; he would have called himself a child of nature, and he was, in fact, the very opposite of an artificial man. How far his aversion to mere conventionalism was carried out, and to what length his candour

<sup>1</sup> Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 226.

sufficed to lead him, we may judge from the earlier chapters of his *Confessions*, in which he boasts of having shown himself such as he really was. The pages in which he describes his vileness are as filthy and disgusting as they well can be; and though many parts of the *Confessions* are delightful reading, yet there is too much special reasoning and too much talk of "sensibility" to make them wholly entertaining. The style in which they are written is simple, clear, and often natural. Read the following charming passage, and try to forget for a moment who "Mama" was.

"Dinners on the grass, at Montagnole, suppers in the arbour the gathering in of the fruits, the vintage, the evenings passed with our people in stripping hemp, all these things were for us so many feasts, in which mama took the same pleasure as I did. More solitary walks possessed a greater charm still, because the feelings vent themselves more freely. We took one amongst others, which forms an era in my memory, on the day of Saint-Louis, after whom mama was named. We set out together and alone, early in the morning, after having heard mass which a Carmelite friar had come to say for us at the break of day in a chapel adjoining the house. I had proposed that we should go and visit the other side of the spot where we were, and which we had not yet visited. We had sent our provisions beforehand, for the walk was to last the whole day. Mama, though a trifle buxom and stout, was no bad walker; we went from hill to hill, and from wood to wood, sometimes in the sun and sometimes in the shade, resting from time to time, and forgetting ourselves during entire hours; talking of ourselves, of our union, of our charming lot, and uttering prayers for its duration which were not granted. Everything seemed to concur to make this day a happy one. It had rained a short time ago; there was no dust, and there were sparkling brooks; a slight breeze stirred the leaves, the air was pure, the horizon without clouds, serenity reigned in the heavens as well as in our hearts. We took our dinner at a peasant's, and shared it with his family, who blessed us from the bottom of their hearts. These poor Savoyards are such good people! After dinner we went under the shade of the large trees, where, whilst I was collecting some dry bits

of wood to make our coffee, mama amused herself in herborising in the brushwood ; and with the flowers of the nosegay which I had collected for her by the way, she made me observe in their formation a thousand interesting things which amused me much, and which were to give me a taste for botany ; but the moment had not yet come, I was absorbed by too many other studies.”<sup>1</sup>

In spite of all the glamour which Rousseau tries to throw over Madame de Warens, her portrait is revolting, and she appears not to have been a faithful type of the women of her time ; but—if Rousseau’s delineation of her is strictly true—a mere *lusus nature*, which ought to have been described in Latin in medical books.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Des diners faits sur l’herbe, à Montagnole, des soupers sous le berceau, la récolte des fruits, les vendanges, les veillées à teiller avec nos gens, tout cela faisoit pour nous autant de fêtes auxquelles maman prenoit le même plaisir que moi. Des promenades plus solitaires avoient un charme plus grand encore, parce que le cœur s’épanchoit plus en liberté. Nous en fîmes une entre autres qui fait époque dans ma mémoire, un jour de Saint-Louis dont maman portoit le nom. Nous partîmes ensemble et seuls de bon matin, après la messe qu’un carme étoit venu nous dire à la pointe du jour dans une chapelle attenante à la maison. J’avois proposé d’aller parcourir la côte opposée à celle où nous étions, et que nous n’avions point visitée encore. Nous avions envoyé nos provisions d’avance, car la course devoit durer tout le jour. Maman, quoique un peu ronde et grasse, ne marchoit pas mal : nous allions de colline en colline et de bois en bois, quelquefois au soleil et souvent à l’ombre, nous reposant de temps en temps, et nous oubliant des heures entières ; causant de nous, de notre union, de la douceur de notre sort, et faisant pour sa durée des vœux qui ne furent pas exaucés. Tout sembloit conspirer au bonheur de cette journée. Il avoit plu depuis peu ; point de poussière, et des ruisseaux bien courants ; un petit vent frais agitoit les feuilles, l’air étoit pur, l’horizon sans nuages, la sérénité régnoit au ciel comme dans nos cœurs. Notre dîner fut fait chez un paysan, et partagé avec sa famille, qui nous benissoit de bon cœur. Ces pauvres Savoyards sont si bonnes gens ! Après le dîner nous gagnâmes l’ombre sous de grands arbres, où, tandis que j’amassois des brins de bois sec pour faire notre café, maman s’amusoit à herboriser parmi les broussailles ; et avec les fleurs du bouquet que chemin faisant je lui avois ramassé, elle me fit remarquer dans leur structure mille choses curieuses, qui m’amusèrent beaucoup, et qui devoient me donner du goût pour la botanique : mais le moment n’étoit pas venu, j’étois distrait par trop d’autres études.”—Part i. book 6.

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau’s would-be philosophical description of Madame de Warens’ character appears to me wholly false. Compare part i. book 5 of the *Confessions*, with his reasons for leaving her, part i. book 6.

The *Social Contract* is, as its author informs us, a portion of a larger work, "undertaken before he had considered his powers," and which, with this exception, he committed to the flames. It is an attempt to determine the basis upon which positive laws should be founded ; and in this sense it serves as introductory to the work of Montesquieu. Rousseau states his object to be to discover "whether, in the civil order, there can exist any rule of sure and legitimate administration, taking men as they are, and laws as they might be ;" and in his first chapter he enters boldly upon his inquiry and his solution. "Man is born free, and he is everywhere in bonds. One imagines himself master of others, who is none the less a greater slave than they. . . . If I were to consider force alone, and the effect derived therefrom, I should say : So long as a people is constrained to obey, and obeys, it does well ; as soon as it can shake off the yoke, and shakes it off, it does still better ; for, recovering its liberty by the same right which deprived it thereof, either it is justified in resuming it, or there was no justification for taking it away. But the social order is a sacred right which serves as the basis of all others. Yet this right does not come from nature ; it is therefore founded upon conventions." And in order to arrive at the theoretic character of these conventions, Rousseau proceeds to carry us back to the formation and constitution of the earliest human societies, for the purpose of tracing from thence downwards the gradual establishment of the social order. "The conventions at which men have arrived are by some writers didactically asserted to have their origin in divine sanction, if not divine dictation ; whereof there is no sufficient proof. Others say that they spring from patriarchal government, or from the right of the strongest. The first of these principles is contained within too narrow limits ; the second is rather a fact than a principle, and proves nothing. But grant that men are all born free and equal, and you can-



not avoid the conclusion that the social order has been based upon a social contract. It remains to discover the true form of this contract ;—a form which defends and protects, with the common force of all, the person and property of each member, and for which each member associating himself with all obeys only on his own account, and remains as free as before.” In this supremacy of all over each, there is no usurpation or tyranny, for “the condition is equal for all.” The usurpation begins when the condition of all, or of a certain number, becomes unequal ; when a law is made not for all alike, but for some to the detriment of others. But so long as the primary social contract is observed, so long are the laws created by all for all essentially legitimate and necessary, and the government of all by all essentially good. “There are two ways wherein a government degenerates—namely, when it becomes narrow, or when the state is dissolved. The government is narrowed when it passes from the majority to the minority—that is, from the democracy to the aristocracy, and from the aristocracy to the monarchy.” As to the form of government, Rousseau wisely stops short of a positive declaration in favour of any one in particular. “When it is asked, in an absolute manner, What is the best government ? a question is proposed which is unsolvable and indeterminate ; or, if this answer be preferred, it has as many good solutions as there are possible combinations in the absolute and relative positions of the people. But if it were asked by what sign one may recognise whether a certain people is ill or well governed, the question might be resolved. . . . Other things being equal, the government under which, apart from external aid, apart from naturalisations and colonies, the citizens populate and multiply the most, is infallibly the best.” The opinion is hazardous, even if we lay all due stress upon the proviso of “other things being equal.” And no doubt Rousseau’s opinions were always more or less hazardous ;

often the most hazardous when the most positively asserted. But it is to be remembered that he spoke to a nation which, in the majority of the interests on which he cared to touch, had worked itself round to a sort of second childhood ; a nation to whom the most elementary principles of political truth had become obscure. To the Frenchmen of the eighteenth century the *Social Contract* came in the form of a revelation ; to the Frenchmen of 1789, or at all events to a great proportion of those who sat in the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies, the political teaching of Rousseau was nothing short of a gospel. And he would be a rash man indeed who would deny that the lessons of the *Social Contract* have not resulted, upon the whole, in an immense accession of civil liberty to France.<sup>1</sup>

But it was not in the domain of political economy that Rousseau was at his best and most characteristic level. His was the character-rôle of the eighteenth century, and it was the part of a social reformer, of a seer eaten up by enthusiasm for the most natural type of human society which might be possible at so vast a distance from the origin of humanity. If Rousseau could have been Adam, and Thérèse Levasseur Eve, it is not improbable that the world's first parents would have been sublimely happy, and would never have forfeited Eden ; but as Rousseau was not a Frenchman of the *ancien régime*, he could at least go back in imagination to the primeval age, and show his corrupt and over-civilised contemporaries how to approach as near as might be to the neglected model. He could deduce from before the fall his precepts and prescriptions for the eighteenth century ; he could indicate from first

<sup>1</sup> An edition of the *Social Contract* was published at Lausanne, in 1797, with the following dedication to Bonaparte :—" Citizen general, ' I have some presentiment,' says J. J. Rousseau, in his twelfth book of the *Contrat Social*, that one day the little island of Corsica will astonish the world.' Europe asks to-day, citizen general, What is the place of your birth ? France replies to Europe : It is the island of Corsica."

principles how the vices and abuses of civilisation were to be remedied. He could take two plastic souls, a boy and a girl, and educate them upon a model which should serve for every father and mother in the world — a model which had been shaped and fashioned by Nature herself, and which knew none of the artificialities of looking-glass and dancing-master, of powder and whalebone, of compliments and conventionalities. Such was the idea of *Emile*; and this also was an irresistible revelation to the contemporaries of Rousseau. The book impressed them marvellously; its success was immense, and its effect incalculable. After the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1764—to which it no doubt contributed, however indirectly—its circulation was redoubled, and its influence multiplied tenfold. It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent of the revolution produced upon the national education of France by this single romance. In every station of life parents began to bring up their children as men, and not as puppets. Louis XVI. himself was taught a trade, and amongst the nobility who fled before the storm of 1789, many were glad to earn their livelihood by the exercise of manual industries, which, but for *Emile*, they would never have acquired.<sup>1</sup>

In his treatment of the education of girls Rousseau displayed in all its force the ardent sensibility of his strongly human character. His personal influence was always greater with women than with men. They devoured every line that he wrote, they were converted to all his ideas, they acted upon all his suggestions. More than one of the proudest and

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Young, who was in France in 1787, says in his *Travels*: “Women of the first fashion in France are now ashamed of not nursing their own children; and stays are universally proscribed from the bodies of the poor infants, which were for so many ages tortured in them. . . . Mankind are much indebted to that splendid genius (Rousseau) who, when living, was hunted from country to country, to seek an asylum, with as much venom as if he had been a mad dog; thanks to the vile spirit of bigotry, which has not yet received its death’s wound.”

purest Frenchwomen was ready to put herself at the mercy of this man whose soul exerted so subtle an authority over their own. He was the *grande passion* of many a young girl, many a wife and mother, many a fashionable and intellectual woman. The secret of this power lay in the fact of his enthusiasm for the sex, his belief in their own illimitable power, their own inestimable worth. In *Emile*, in the *New Héloïse*, he draws a grand distinction between the sexes. The dead level of equality, the cold assertion of woman's right to the same education and the same condition as man, would have shocked and pained him beyond measure; and even the moderate ideas of Thomas in this direction were incompatible with the fervid persuasive style with which Rousseau drew a bold line between the domains of male and female education. The principles on which he trained Sophie to be the companion of Emile were entirely distinct from the principles on which he trained Emile to take his place in the world. Unquestionably he went too far in his limitation of the training of women. He could conceive no higher destiny for them than that of ripening steadily from the cradle to the veil; to become thereafter the reasonable companions, it might be the guides and mistresses of men, but never to become their rivals or their opponents. "To please them (men), to be useful to them, to be loved and honoured by them, to bring them up when young, to take care of them when old, to counsel and console them, to make their lives pleasant and sweet: such are the duties of women in all times, and such is what they ought to be taught from their infancy." And this, observe, not because men choose to have such companions in their wives, but because it is what women are and must be at their best. "If we had to wait until they were able methodically to discuss these deep questions, we should run the risk of never speaking to them on such questions at all." The danger clearly lies in the generalisation. Some women



can comprehend and discuss better than they can please and console ; some, again, never have the chance of bringing up the young or taking care of the old. It is for these, and these alone, that education need know no limits ; and this is just the side of the question which Rousseau neglected. But it is easy to see why his countrywomen loved and worshipped him ; and it is easy also to see why his teachings, in this respect also, were pregnant of such great results.

Of course Rousseau was the master of a school in literature as well as in politics and society. His recourse to the natural and the simple, in place of the artificial and the conventional, his ardour and exaltation of thought and language, rising frequently into enthusiasm, and not unfrequently lapsing into declamation, could not fail to communicate themselves to others. Even his rivals, even men of more powerful intellect than his own, even d'Holbach, Thomas, Marmontel, Diderot, Voltaire, could not avoid being modified in their style by the style of Rousseau. They became more rhetorical, more declamatory, more impassioned, more paradoxical. Upon men of less note, and upon the next generation in particular, Rousseau's literary influence was more marked. French oratory had languished since the time of Bossuet and his contemporaries ; now it was to revive in another form. Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, almost all the revolutionary orators, widely as they diverged in opinion and in expression, betrayed the influence of Rousseau's fervid eloquence. In vain La Harpe wrote in the *Mercur*, after Rousseau's death, that he was "the most subtle of sophists, the most eloquent of rhetoricians, the most shameless of cynics," that he himself could never appreciate the paradoxical arrogance which was called his energy, and the pretentiousness of phraseology which they called his ardour ; in vain Voltaire had sneered, Hume and d'Alembert had ridiculed him ; in vain Rousseau's own friends had admitted

his shortcomings or deplored his excesses : he remained one of the greatest, if not the very greatest literary power of the age, and his influence on letters, as on life and politics, was deeper, if not wider and more enduring, than that of any other Frenchman of the century.

## § 2. A TALENTED LITERARY PARVENU

Before we actually enter upon the period of the Revolution there is one other figure which we must attempt to present to the spectators of the curious melodrama enacted in France during the eighteenth century ; a figure which ought to stand out prominently amongst the motley group of actors—and that not so much by virtue of literary merit and importance, as because of a certain fantastic individuality which at once commands our interest and evokes our laughter. The Figaro of his age, himself the creator of the Figaro with whom all the world has since grown familiar, Pierre Augustin Caron, afterwards Beaumarchais,<sup>1</sup> and a little later *de* Beaumarchais by letters patent of his own imagination, was an exaggerated type of the lucky adventurer of the *ancien régime*, during the latter part whereof it was by no means difficult for an adventurer to disport himself on the outskirts of the court, provided he was not deficient in impudence, or in money, or in literary ability. Madame de Tencin had taught the young Marmontel that, in order to hold his own in the highest society of Paris and Versailles, he had but to *riser au solide*, and to make friends amongst women rather than men. Beaumarchais started without patronage, but he instinctively guided his conduct by these golden rules. Shrewd common sense he had by nature, and it was nature also which fur-

<sup>1</sup> 1732-1799.

nished him with the handsome face, the commanding figure, the easy bearing and confidence, which enabled him to make his way amongst the fair sex. Impudence too, and pluck, were characteristic with the young watchmaker who determined to shine in the fashionable world, and who, by dint of mere perseverance and good fortune, in spite of his dangerous versatility and love of pleasure, left behind him at his death not only a literary reputation but also a vast fortune.

The son of a watchmaker, Caron followed the same occupation ; and at the age of twenty, after successfully vindicating his title to a patent out of which a rival had endeavoured to cheat him, he obtained, through his first wife's money, a post about the court, the principal duty of which was to "precede the viands of his Majesty." Not long satisfied with this advancement, he took to playing the guitar, and providing the music for the entertainments of the daughters of Louis XV., and of the ladies and gentlemen of the court. By this time he had learned the trick of fine manners, had assumed the *de*, and had forgotten the watchmaking. One day a courtier ventured to remind him of it, handing him his watch for repair. Beaumarchais took the watch, saying, "I warn you that I have become very clumsy ;" and then he dropped it on the ground. Another courtier joked him about his nobility. "Sir," answered Beaumarchais, "I hold the receipt of the sum I paid for it." A third went farther, and offered the *parvenu* a serious insult. Beaumarchais challenged him to a duel, and killed him. A man so ready with his tongue and with his sword could not but succeed ; and, moreover, he had won the ladies on his side. It was, however, the financier Paris-Duverney, a man of discernment and literary taste, who thirty years before had laid the foundation of Voltaire's fortune, to whom Beaumarchais owed his greatest advancement. He put the young man in the way of proving his financial abilities ; and he did it to such a good purpose that

a few years later he was able to purchase the post of lieutenant-general of the hunt for half a million of francs. All this time his life was one of pleasure as well as of money-making; and his adventures would suffice for a novel of infinite interest and variety.

The desire to be known as a man of letters came to Beaumarchais as soon as his anxiety to be rich was satisfied. At the age of thirty-five he wrote his drama of *Eugénie*, which barely escaped being a failure; three years later he produced *The Two Friends*, which had no success at all. His next literary effort was called forth by the first check which his prosperity received, and which curiously illustrates the manners of the age. On the death of Paris-Duverney, Beaumarchais struck the balance of his accounts with his late patron, and made out that the estate of the latter owed him fifteen thousand francs. The legatee, a certain Count de la Blache, resisted the claim; Beaumarchais went to law, and gained his cause. The count appealed to Parliament; and when Beaumarchais was about to prepare for this new contest with his usual lavish employment of bribes and gifts, he was suddenly cast into prison on account of a quarrel which he had had with the Duke de Chaulnes, with whose mistress he was said to have been too intimate. A report had to be drawn up about the suit by M. Goezmann, a member of the Parliament of Paris,<sup>1</sup> to whose wife Beaumarchais sent a hundred louis, and a watch of the same value; and, according to his own account, Madame exacted a further fifteen louis for her husband's secretary. The case, nevertheless, went against him; and M. Goezmann returned the hundred louis and the watch. Beaumarchais, who always had an eye to small things—though he gave many instances

<sup>1</sup> The Parliament was called at that time "the Parliament Maupeou." The chancellor of that name suppressed the old parliament and established a new one, composed of the members of the grand council, and also of seventy-five others, whose offices were not hereditary, and who were chosen by the king.



of generosity to needy men—claimed the fifteen louis in addition ; and the counsellor, having a mind to stick to these, and perceiving that Beaumarchais was in evil odour with the authorities and with his former patrons at court, flatly denied that his wife had received the money, and accused him of attempted bribery. The bribery of a counsellor of Parliament was a crime to which heavy penalties were attached, amongst them being the loss of civil rights. Beaumarchais, knowing that he was in fact guilty of this crime, and that he could not hope to escape punishment, rose to the occasion, and displayed the genius of which he was undoubtedly possessed. He sat down and wrote his *Memorial* (1773); became in fact a special pleader in his own cause, and appealed, not so much to the judges as to public opinion, against the sentence which was hanging over him.

This *Memorial* is nothing else than the romance which I have just said might be woven out of Beaumarchais' life ; but it is the romance only of the first, and that the least entertaining and stirring portion of it. He describes all that he had been and done, all that he was, and possibly much that he was not. He writes with a dash and spirit which wrung from Voltaire the warmest eulogy, and which inspired Goethe to dramatise one of his episodes, wherein Beaumarchais relates how he had gone to Spain to rescue his sister from the clutches of the infamous Clavijo.<sup>1</sup> He covered all his enemies with ridicule, Goezmann and his wife, the judges, the Parliament itself. The success of this *Memorial*, from a literary point of view, was immense. Everybody read and talked of it. Public opinion sympathised with the man who had been so lucky, and who would not tamely submit to be deserted by his luck. Such phrases as the following, comparatively new at the time, would undoubtedly help his

<sup>1</sup> Beaumarchais was condemned February 16, 1774, and on the 1st of June 1774 Goethe's tragedy *Clavijo* was ready.

success : "I am a citizen," he writes ; "I am a citizen ; that means that I am neither a courtier, nor an abbé, nor a nobleman, nor a financier, nor a favourite, nor anything which is called power to-day. I am a citizen ; that is to say something quite new, something unknown, unheard of in France. I am a citizen ; that is to say, what you should have been for two hundred years, what you will be in twenty years perhaps." Goetzmann was expelled from Parliament, the scribblers who had attacked Beaumarchais dared not show their faces ; but for all that his appeal was dismissed. Half Paris hastened to call upon the victim, for victim he was. Society was closed against the man whom the law declared infamous, and he could never dream of finding his way back to the court, where he had once been so much in favour. It would have been enough to crush most men ; but Beaumarchais was not to be crushed. All the energy of his mind was at once directed towards securing his rehabilitation.

He had again in 1781 a lawsuit with the banker Kornmann, for whom Bergasse was advocate, and who accused him of having aided in the seduction of his wife. He wrote several brochures, gained his suit before the court, but lost it before public opinion. For three years he laboured at the apparently hopeless task of regaining the favour of his former friends ; and the devices which he employed are subject-matter for another romance—this time, indeed, for a melodramatic farce. He bethought him of offering himself for the secret service of the king, and he began by revealing the fact that a terrible libel on Madame du Barry was about to be issued in London. His offer of service was accepted ; he hastened to England, and bought up every copy of the libel before it had been published.<sup>1</sup> Returning to Paris

<sup>1</sup> This libel, *Memoires secrets d'une femme publique*, was written by Charles Thévenot de Morande (1748-1805), who received for its suppression 20,000 *livres*, and a yearly pension of 4000 *livres*.

in the hope of being restored to favour, he found that Louis XV. was on his deathbed ; his toil had gone for nothing. The next scene of the comedy is more exciting, though it does not display much originality of conception. This time it was a pamphlet against Marie Antoinette. Louis XVI. believed what Beaumarchais told him, and gave him a commission written in his own hand, which the zealous messenger enclosed in a box of gold, and hung round his neck. He went to England, to Holland, to Nuremberg, to Vienna ; he tracked the pamphlet down to the very last copy, which he found in the possession of a Jew, in the depths of an Austrian forest. He seized the copy, and was returning in triumph, when he was set upon by robbers, who struck him to the ground with their poniards ; but the golden locket, containing the king's talisman, saved his life. Wounded and weak, he made his way back to Vienna ; and here he was thrown into prison by Maria Theresa, mother of the French queen. Liberated at last, he came to Paris and related his hairbreadth escapes ; but alas, there were found those who persuaded the government that Beaumarchais was but attempting to deceive them. Nothing daunted, he began again. The Chevalier d'Eon, who lived in London, had been tantalising the curiosity of France, which did not know whether to believe him a man or a woman. The government held to the latter opinion, and wished to compel her to retain the garments proper to her sex. Beaumarchais undertook the commission. To him the *chevalière* admitted that she was a woman ; and, moreover, that she had become so sensible of his, Beaumarchais', charms that she would consent thenceforth never to appear as a man, provided, as a mere formality, that the government would settle an income upon her. This was agreed to ; Beaumarchais had earned his pardon, and received it ; and the Chevalier—for it was a man after all—laughed quietly in his sleeves. Restored to favour, Beau-

marchais obtained a contract for supplying the American colonies, then revolting against England, with arms; and he made more money by this speculation than by any other he had undertaken.<sup>1</sup>

Beaumarchais now set to work to acquire new fame as an author; and in his comedies, the *Barber of Seville* and the *Marriage of Figaro*, he made two happy hits. *Tarare* was little less happy; and its history is as curious as any of the curious episodes of its author's life. It was played by the royal family at the Trianon, it was interdicted by the police, it was read in the drawing-rooms, it was condemned by the ministry. Louis himself, in a fit of annoyance, sent Beaumarchais to prison, the public made a demonstration in his favour; he was released, apologised to, offered a pension, and received also the arrears due to him, two millions of francs, which he employed on his American contract. Soon afterwards he brought out the first complete edition of Voltaire, which he was compelled to issue across the frontier, at Kehl. When the Revolution broke out he was accused of wishing to provide arms to the émigrés. Obligated to flee, he wandered in England and Holland, returned to France, was put into prison, and barely escaped being put to death. He died suddenly in 1799 in an apoplectic fit.

*The Barber of Seville* (1775) and the *Marriage of Figaro* (1784), are two fantastic comedies founded upon the adventures of one and the same character—an entirely new and bright creation. Figaro, a village barber in the first piece, who has tried his hand at several trades, contrives in various ways to outwit every one, succeeds, by his skill, in everything that he undertakes, and does what he likes with all men. He is always free and easy, sarcastic, not too par-

<sup>1</sup> It was not, however, until 1835 that his heirs received from the United States Government the payment of the balance of 800,000 francs due to Beaumarchais.



ticular about the means to be employed, and is, in one word, a portrait, and that not a flattered one, of the author himself, just as Chérubin may possibly have been one of Beaumarchais in his youth. In the second piece, Figaro, who has become a valet, declaims too much, and represents the hatred of the people against the aristocracy ; of the valet against the master, and that master a young, witty, and generous nobleman.

The *Memorial* of Beaumarchais belongs in some sense to a species of French literature for which the eighteenth century was especially famous ; and it was amongst the first of a copious stream of memoirs, pleas, protests, and pamphlets, which, towards the Revolution, became ever more numerous, more bold, and more eloquent. Public opinion was by this time completely formed in France. Voltaire, more than any other single man, had taught his country how to appreciate wit and eloquence and fervour at its best ; and the national genius provided both for the supply and for the consumption of this all-powerful and ever-welcome literature. Special pleading is perhaps the most characteristic general term which we can apply to it ; and the special pleading intended for courts of law was one of its most brilliant and lofty types. " When Mirabeau began to speak in the National Assembly, he was at first but the continuator of those courageous men who had pleaded for Calas, Sirven, Labarre, Lally-Tollendal, who had stigmatised one after another all the iniquities of the social order of things—the Voltaires, the de Beaumonts, the La Chalotais, the Linguets, Beaumarchais himself."<sup>1</sup> The reports and letters of the various intendants, especially during the last generation of the *ancien régime*, are in themselves a literature of intense and painful eloquence, special pleadings, more or less conscious, in behalf of the down-trodden people.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Albert, *la littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> For abundant illustrations see Taine, *Ancien Régime*, bk. v. ch. 1.

The national archives contain these and similar documents of the same period by the hundred. The *procès-verbaux* of the provincial assemblies are written in words of fire, than which nothing can be more forcible or more harrowing. Such pamphlets and treatises, again, as the *Ephémérides du Citoyen*, by Théron de Montaugé (1766), the *Description of Auvergne*, by Dulaure (1789), the *Doléances* of Biarzat (1788), the *Treatise on Population*, by the marquis de Mirabeau, and the *Correspondence* of Métra, are scathing and unanswerable confirmations of facts with which history has made us only too familiar. There was more than enough in the condition of France during the eighteenth century to give the inspiration of a divine invective to the more patriotic writers of the age, and to add an eloquence to literature which it could derive from none of the more commonplace sorrows and passions of humanity.

### § 3. SOCIETY AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Amongst the characteristics of French literature in the eighteenth century we must not fail to take note of one which was at the same time a characteristic of society in general, and particularly of fashionable and intellectual society — I mean the taste for indecent anecdotes, for unclean allusions and jests. The numerous scandals of the court, and of the ranks of society which came next to it, half concealed, and more than half excused as they were by the *convenances* of etiquette, were repeated from mouth to mouth with the utmost zest and industry; and the appetite for such narratives had grown so strong that, when the supply failed, it became absolutely necessary for the retailers of that kind of commodity, who were the great majority of the fashionable world,

to invent new stories, or at least to make use of the inventions of others. In such a state of things it was not to be wondered at that even men and women of letters capable of the very highest flights should condescend to provide what their readers most desired to have. Few writers of the eighteenth century could resist such an inducement; even Montesquieu, as we have seen, thought it necessary to flavour his *Persian Letters*, and to a less degree his *Spirit of Law*, with these far from aromatic spices. Voltaire made his *Pucelle* so hot in the mouth that it could not be put into the hands of an ordinary English reader of the present day. Rousseau is still more unreadable in parts, though the fleshliness is less assumed than indigenous in this genuine sentimentalist. Other writers of inferior literary merit were not squeamish in their subjects or their suggestions. Some books, as obscene as it is possible to write them, were favourites in the drawing-rooms and boudoirs of not a few of the ladies of Paris; and we may be sure that the rank and file of society was not more exclusive in its tastes than those from whom it took its tone. And the worst of it was, that the wit of such literature as this was generally the least of its recommendations. Indecency was relished for its own sake, and for much the same reason that it was practised in everyday life. Once more, literature is but the reflexion of manners and actions; and we may judge of what the Frenchmen and Frenchwomen of the *ancien régime* were by what they liked best to read. In England, during the same period, or perhaps a generation earlier, there was coarseness enough; and of the two nations French critics are apt to consider England the coarser. This may be true; but in the indecency of Swift, of Fielding, of Smollett—I except Sterne—we can see that it is the natural product of overfed animal spirits, flavoured with a good deal of genuine wit, which is set off and rendered more pungent by the very license of the diction. In France it

can hardly be said that this was usually the case amongst the literary panderers of the eighteenth century. The vice was more general, more subtle, more deliberately indulged ; and it was a vice which had sapped the very bases of national morality. One example will suffice, and I borrow it in preference from an Englishman, Arthur Young, who knew France well, and travelled there during the year 1787, and two following years. Being at Béziers, he was anxious to visit the abbé Rozier, the celebrated editor of the *Journal de Physique*, "and who is now publishing a dictionary of husbandry. . . . They told me that he had left Béziers two years . . . because the bishop of Béziers had been cutting a road through the abbé's farm, at the expense of the province, to lead to the house of the bishop's mistress."<sup>1</sup>

Society in France—civil, religious, and domestic society—was indeed at its worst and weakest ; and this not because there was not infinite refinement, art, cultivation, and, in some few quarters, prosperity, but because there were few gradations of prosperity between the very highest and the very lowest ; because all wholesome relations between class and class were at an end ; and because, as Rousseau had shown, the virtual contract of society had been utterly violated and set at naught. In some parts of the country, indeed, the signs of decay were far less conspicuous than in others, and certain of the larger provincial towns presented a striking contrast to the wretchedness of the provinces in general. Espe-

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Young, *Travels in France*, etc, July 24, 1787. I give here his further remarks : " This is a pretty feature of a government ; that a man is to be forced to sell his estate, and driven out of a country, because bishops make love. I suppose to their neighbours' wives, as no other love is fashionable in France. Which of my neighbours' wives will tempt the Bishop of Norwich to make a road through my farm, and drive me to sell Bradfield ? I gave my authority for this anecdote, the chat of a table d'hôte ; it is as likely to be false as true ; but Languedocian bishops are certainly not English ones." The bishop of Béziers from 1771-1790 was Almar Claude de Ségur, a nobleman of ancient descent.



cially was this the case as it came under the observation of travellers, who of course saw less under the surface than Frenchmen themselves. Arthur Young, in the very interesting volume of travels which gives one of the most faithful pictures extant of the France of 1787-1789—a volume we have already mentioned—draws a graphic sketch of the prosperity of Bordeaux.<sup>1</sup> He found the merchants of that city living in a most luxurious style, with “houses and establishments on expensive scales: great entertainments, and many served on plate.”

“The theatre, built about ten or twelve years ago, is by far the most magnificent in France. The building is insulated, and fills up a space of three hundred and six feet by one hundred and sixty-five, one end being the principal front, containing a portico the whole length of it, of twelve very large Corinthian columns. . . . The theatre itself is of a vast size; in shape the segment of an oval. The establishment of actors, actresses, singers, dancers, orchestra, etc., speaks the wealth and luxury of the place. . . . Pieces are performed every night, Sundays not excepted, as everywhere in France. . . . This theatre, which does so much honour to the pleasures of Bordeaux, was raised at the expense of the town, and cost 270,000 English pounds sterling.”

Not much sign here of decay, beyond what may be found in every large town of Europe at the present day; and certainly Young did not at that moment dream of decay. After mentioning “that the rent of houses and lodgings rises every day, they complain that the expenses of living have increased in ten years full thirty per cent,” he continues, “there can hardly be a clearer proof of an advance in prosperity.” But later on he sees France under other aspects, and finds reason to change his tone. When he saw one quarter of the arable land left barren, for want of enterprise and capital; the small proprietors and labourers drained of their earnings and wages

<sup>1</sup> August 26, 1787.

by the exactions of the Government ; men who ought to have been the mainstay of national prosperity actually driven to abandon their property or tenancies because they could no longer provide both taxes for the State and food for themselves ; when he was forced to the conclusion that the French agricultural labourer was as much as seventy-six per cent less comfortable, worse fed and clothed, worse treated in health and disease, than the English ; when he saw, as at Combourg, "the people almost as wild as their country, and the town one of the most brutal, filthy places that can be seen : mud houses, and no pavement:"<sup>1</sup> at Montauban "the people . . . if possible, worse clad than with no clothes at all," and "one-third of . . . this province (Brittany) seems uncultivated ;"<sup>2</sup> at Clermont, streets which reminded him of nothing better than "trenches cut through a dung-heap ;" on every hand poverty, neglect, starvation, misery, save in a few large towns, and amongst the idlers of the metropolis, who were luxurious at their fellow-creatures' expense, our honest Englishman cried out, "Oh ! if I were the legislator of France for a day, I would make such great lords skip !"<sup>3</sup> "What have kings, and ministers, and parliaments, and states to answer for, seeing millions of hands that would be industrious, yet idle and starving, through the execrable maxims of despotism, or the equally detestable prejudices of a feudal nobility ?" He could not but realise the fact that the ruin of France was at hand, even if he had not had the opportunity<sup>4</sup> of witnessing in the summer of 1789 the outbreak of the French Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sept. 1, 1788.<sup>2</sup> Sept. 5, 1788.<sup>3</sup> Aug. 29, 1787.<sup>4</sup> Sept. 5, 1788.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. John Moore, who travelled in France about 1773 with the Duke of Hamilton, saw this also ; and in his *View of Society and Manners in France*, etc., third edition, 1780, he says : "Examples of the abuse of power and insolence of office are to be met with everywhere . . . Everything in this kingdom is arranged for the accommodation of the rich and the powerful . . . To have an adequate idea of the wealth of England, we must visit the provinces,

Writing on the 27th of June 1789, after the king had been frightened by the mob, and by the resolute attitude of its leaders, into summoning the three estates to meet for the discussion of the national crisis, Arthur Young observes :—

“ It was represented to him (Louis XVI.) that the want of bread was so great in every part of the kingdom that there was no extremity to which the people might not be driven : that they were nearly starving, and consequently ready to listen to any suggestions, and on the *qui vive* for all sorts of mischief : that Paris and Versailles would inevitably be burnt ; and, in a word, that all sorts of misery and confusion would follow his adherence to the system announced in the ‘ *séance royale*.’ ”

The English spectator of this first phase of the Revolution appears to have been very sanguine of its results.

“ Such benefits,” he continues, “ will confer happiness on twenty-five millions of people ; a noble and animating idea, that ought to fill the mind of every citizen of the world, whatever be his country, religion, or pursuit. I will not allow myself to believe for a moment that the representatives of the people can ever so far forget their duty to the French nation, to humanity, and their own fame, as to suffer any inordinate and impracticable views, any visionary or theoretic systems, any frivolous ideas of speculative perfection, much less any ambitious private views, to impede their progress or turn aside their exertions from that security which is in their hands, to place on the chance and hazard of public commotion and civil war the invaluable blessings which are certainly in their power. I will not conceive it possible that

and see how the nobility, the gentry, and especially the farmers and country people in general, live. . . . To retain a favourable notion of the wealth of France, we must remain in the capital, or visit a few trading or manufacturing towns, but must seldom enter the château of the seigneur or the hut of the peasant. In the one we shall find nothing but tawdry furniture, and from the other we shall be scared by penury. . . . When there is a permanent poverty through various reigns, and for a long tract of years, among the peasantry of such a country as France, this seems to me the surest proof of a careless, and consequently an oppressive government. . . . As matters are at present, in my opinion, no body of men in France has, properly speaking, any rights.”

men, who have eternal fame within their grasp, will place the rich inheritance on the cast of a die, and losing the venture, be damned among the worst and most profligate adventurers that ever disgraced humanity."

Arthur Young had not fathomed the depths of the situation in France; and it is only just to him to say that few men, even amongst the popular leaders themselves, had a much more definite idea of what the next three or four years were to bring forth. "The events that followed," said the traveller in 1794, "were as little to be thought of as myself being made king of France."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This Arthur Young says in a note of the second edition of his *Travels*.





## BOOK VII

# THE REVOLUTION.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### 1. THE ORATORS OF THE REVOLUTION.

THE progress of the French Revolution from its outbreak in 1789 to the close of the century, was marked by a great intellectual and literary activity, well worthy of careful consideration, though neither so striking nor so brilliant in its results as the literature which immediately preceded it. Within the dozen years previous to the meeting of the three estates of the National Assembly, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Buffon had died, and there was no one to take their place. It is true that the nation no longer needed philosophers and poets. These had amply completed their work, and the men of ideas were giving way before the men of action. The philosophers of the eighteenth century had been the pioneers of national emancipation; they had given the *coup de grâce* to every corrupt institution in the country; they had sown the seeds of the evil, as well as of the good, that was destined to usher in a new era; they had created their Frankenstein, and perhaps it was well for them that they should not live to see him at his work. On the other hand, if they had died before the Revolution and the Reign of Terror, they were denied the triumph of witnessing the fulfilment of all their highest and most honourable ambitions. The right of thought

and speech, the principle of representative self-government, equality before the law, an open career in the public services, the emancipation of industry—all these principles, with all that they imply, had been constantly advocated in France for upwards of half a century; but their first and most powerful advocates did not live to see them carried out. The drama was enacted without their assistance. They had furnished its subject, but it was reserved for others, with less genius and more hardihood, to elaborate its plot.

Men of letters were now to be succeeded by men of speech: eloquence assumes the position hitherto occupied by wielders of the pen. The Constituent and Legislative Assemblies and the Convention bring before us a school of rhetoric which, amidst all its passion and violence, yet manifestly continued the dominant philosophical ideas of the eighteenth century. "In the first, the doctrines of Montesquieu and Voltaire were represented by Mounier,<sup>1</sup> Malouet,<sup>2</sup> Lally-Tollendal;<sup>3</sup> the radical extreme, founded on the principles of the *Contrat Social*, was led by A. de Lameth,<sup>4</sup> Barnave,<sup>5</sup> the abbé Sieyès,<sup>6</sup> and A. Duport,<sup>7</sup> whilst the *ancien régime* found its apologists in Cazalès<sup>8</sup> and Maury.<sup>9</sup> Above all these towered the figure of the eloquent Mirabeau,<sup>10</sup> who asserted with unique force and superior intelligence the rights of the people. In the Legislative Assembly and in the Convention we find Condorcet,<sup>11</sup> the biographer of Voltaire, Vergniaud,<sup>12</sup> Guadet,<sup>13</sup> Gensonné,<sup>14</sup> disciples of the most impracticable views of Rousseau. The orators of the Convention lead us finally from Danton<sup>15</sup> to Robespierre<sup>16</sup> and Marat,<sup>17</sup> beyond the point where a literary record can take cognisance of them."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1758-1806.<sup>2</sup> 1740-1814.<sup>3</sup> 1751-1830.<sup>4</sup> 1760-1829.<sup>5</sup> 1761-1793.<sup>6</sup> 1748-1836.<sup>7</sup> 1759-1798.<sup>8</sup> 1758-1805.<sup>9</sup> 1746-1817.<sup>10</sup> 1749-1791.<sup>11</sup> 1743-1794.<sup>12</sup> 1753-1793.<sup>13</sup> 1758-1794.<sup>14</sup> 1758-1793.<sup>15</sup> 1759-1794.<sup>16</sup> 1758-1794.<sup>17</sup> 1744-1793.<sup>18</sup> Cf. Demogeot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 539.

Let us turn to Mirabeau first ; Mirabeau, who might have done so much for his country if his character had been equal to his talent and his courage ; Mirabeau, who, after succeeding Necker as the recognised mouthpiece of the national will in the Assembly of 1789, said to the Marquis de Brézé, who brought an imperious message from the king : “ Go and tell him who sent you that we are here by the will of the people, and only bayonets shall drive us hence ; ” Mirabeau, who with bitter contrition exclaimed to a friend : “ Ah, how the immorality of my youth hinders the public good ! ” In estimating the capacity of this earliest of the tribunes of the French people, we must remember that he had before him no model of parliamentary eloquence. When Louis XVI. was compelled to summon the States-General, they had not met for a century and three-quarters. The language fit to be employed by a Frenchman in deliberation upon the interests of his country was not stereotyped, as it is now-a-days in England, so that a man may sit down and study it in a volume of parliamentary debates. In other words, it was necessary that the orator should speak straight out from the heart, and translate his feelings into words on the spur of the moment ; and only by such natural fervour and unpremeditated rhetoric could a member of the Constituent Assembly or the Convention secure a hearing. It was not merely his colleagues that he had to persuade ; the galleries of the old court riding-school of the Tuileries, in which the meetings were held, were crammed by the most eager and critical crowds, whose applause and reproaches could not be suppressed. It was before such audiences that Mirabeau and the other active politicians of the Revolution had to speak ; and on them, at a time when words were but the photographs of stirring events, the periods of a Bossuet or a Fléchier would have been thrown away.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am much indebted to M. Géraudel's *Histoire de la littérature française pendant la révolution* for my chapters on the literary history of the Revolution.



Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, count de Mirabeau, was born at Bignon, near Nemours, of an old Italian family, and received an ill-regulated but very comprehensive education. The career of arms, to which his father introduced him, did not suit the loose and dissolute temper of the man, and, on account of some rivalry with his colonel for the favours of a fair lady, and subsequent quarrels, he left his regiment, without permission, and went to Paris. He was imprisoned in the fortress of the island of Ré, and whilst there he composed his *Essay on Despotism*. After his release he went to make a campaign in Corsica, and appeared to have behaved so courageously that his chiefs asked for him a captaincy; but his father, a stern and rather crazy political economist, would not allow this, and Honoré went to live with his uncle. In 1772 he married the daughter of the Marquis de Marignane, and lived at the castle of Mirabeau, but became seriously embarrassed by debts, and was anew put in prison in the castle of If, and afterwards in the fortress of Joux, in the Jura, near Pontarlier. He received permission to visit the town, became acquainted with the young wife of the old Marquis de Monnier, and fled with her first to Switzerland and then to Holland. But he was soon arrested and again imprisoned at Vincennes, where he remained nearly four years. During that time he is said to have written thirteen works; amongst them being one upon *Lettres de Cachet and the State Prisons*, in which he hits many a blot in the administration of justice, makes an eloquent plea for the liberty of the individual, and seems to have formed the resolution to break with his class and with the associations of absolutism. Between 1783 and 1787 he travelled, read, and wrote, and then took his seat in the Assembly as member for Aix.

Mirabeau was one of the men whom France had elected, after a hundred and seventy-five years of political silence, to represent her in the great council of the nation; and it is

worth while to bear in mind the intoxication of spirit under the influence of which these elections were made. "For two months," wrote the commandant of Armagnac to Necker,<sup>1</sup> at the end of May 1789, "inferior judges and lawyers, with which both town and country swarm, with a view to being elected to the States-General have dogged the steps of the members of the Third-Estate, under the pretext of standing by them, and enlightening their ignorance. . . . They have made a point of persuading them that, in the States-General, they alone would be masters and regulate all the affairs of the kingdom; that the Third-Estate, in selecting its representatives amongst lawyers, would secure the might and the right to take the lead, to abolish nobility, and to cancel all its rights and privileges, so that it should no longer be hereditary; but that all citizens, when they deserved it, should be entitled to claim it; that, if the people would delegate them, they would see that all which the Third-Estate wished would be granted, since the lower clergy, members of the Third-Estate, having resolved to separate from the higher clergy, and to unite with them, the nobles and the clergy together would have but one vote against two of the Third-Estate. . . . If the Third-Estate had chosen sensible citizens or merchants, they would readily have combined with the other two orders." Mirabeau was not a lawyer, but it was in the spirit here described that he appealed for and obtained the suffrages of one of the very constituencies which the Marquis de Fodoas had before his eyes.

Of noble birth, "the plebeian count," as his aristocratic acquaintances contemptuously styled him, Mirabeau had renounced his order, and claimed the suffrages of the electors

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the Marquis de Fodoas to Necker, as quoted by Taine, *L'ancien Régime*, whose chapter iv, bk. 3, is worth reading on the subject; and so is the remarkable chapter xvi, "On the Revolution of France," in the second part of Arthur Young's *Tour in France*.

in the character of a modern Gracchus. Addressing a crowd of the commons of Provence, after describing the death of the Roman brothers, he cried: "Thus perished the last of the Gracchi; but, before he died, he cast a handful of dust to heaven, invoking the avenging gods; and from this dust sprang Marius; Marius, less great through his extermination of the Cimbrians and Teutons than for having annihilated in Rome the aristocratic power of the nobility." It was Mirabeau, an aristocrat, elected to be the scourge of aristocrats, who, on the meeting of the States-General, at once asserted and vindicated the supremacy of the Third-Estate, shook off the timid opposition of the nobility and clergy, and converted the national Parliament into a Constituent Assembly. Such was the first triumph of eloquence amongst the tribunes of the people.

It was the ill-advised dismissal of Necker<sup>1</sup> by the king which led to the leadership of the Assembly passing into Mirabeau's hands. The people had had confidence in Necker; they were enraged by his disgrace, and still more so by seeing the chamber surrounded by troops. An ominous report from Versailles came to add fuel to the fire of resentment. In the presence of the queen a crowd of dissolute courtiers had drunk confusion to the representatives of the people, and had boasted of their speedy suppression. They little knew the force of the rising storm. Five-and-thirty years ago, d'Argenson had foreseen this very crisis, and had declared that, whenever the States-General should be suffered to meet, they would not meet in vain. A vast mob marched from Paris to Versailles, slaughtered the guards, yelled insults against the queen, and brought back the king a virtual prisoner to the capital. In despatching a deputation to Louis from the chambers, Mirabeau had addressed them in one of the fiery outbursts of eloquence for which he is famous. "Tell him plainly," he said, "tell him that the mercenary hordes by whom we are invested received

<sup>1</sup> See about Necker, bk. v. ch. ii. § 5, *Literary men of the day*.

yesterday the visit of princes, princesses, minions, and favourites, with their caresses, their exhortations, and their presents ; tell him that all night these foreign satellites, gorged with gold and wine, have been foretelling, in their impious orgies, the enslavement of France, and that their brutish prayers invoked the destruction of the National Assembly ; tell him that in his own palace the courtiers have danced to the sound of this barbarous music, and that just such was the prelude of the St. Bartholomew !” Two days later Necker was recalled ; but meanwhile the Bastille had fallen and the mob of Paris had tasted blood.

The condition of the finances was in the last degree critical ; a few millions were necessary in order to save France from imminent bankruptcy ; and the minister had not been able to induce the Assembly to vote them. Here were the delegates of a people which had for so many years been ground to the very dust by taxes, imposts, *tailles*, *corvées*, exactions of a hundred kinds ; and they sat stolid and unreasoning in their simple determination not to lay another straw upon the nation’s back. Mirabeau saw the whole predicament in an instant ; and with perhaps the most lofty inspiration that has ever loosened the tongue of one of nature’s genuine orators, he rushed to the tribune and spoke.

“What, then, is bankruptcy, if it is not the most cruel, the most unjust, the most unequal, the most disastrous of imposts ? . . . Two ages of plunder and robbery have dug the gulf in which the kingdom is ready to be swallowed up. We must close this fearful gulf ! Well ! here is a list of the owners of property in France ; choose from amongst the wealthiest, that you may sacrifice the smallest number of citizens ; but choose ; for should not a small number perish to save the mass of the people ? Come now, these two thousand notables possess wherewithal to cover the deficit. Bring back order into your finances, peace and prosperity to the kingdom. . . . Strike, immolate without pity these wretched victims ! hurl them into the abyss



. . . You start with horror, unreasonable men, cowardly men! Do you not see, then, that in decreeing bankruptcy, or, what is still more odious, rendering it inevitable without decreeing it, you stain yourselves by an act a thousand times more criminal; and, incredible fact, uselessly criminal? For, indeed, this horrible sacrifice would certainly wipe out the deficit; but do you suppose that, because you will not have paid, you will owe nothing more? Do you believe that the thousands, the millions of men, who in an instant will lose, by the terrible explosion or by its recoils, all that was the consolation and perhaps the only support of their lives, will leave you peaceably to enjoy your crime? You stolid contemplaters of the incalculable evils which this catastrophe will vomit upon France! you unfeeling self-seekers, who think that these convulsions of despair and misery will pass like so many others, and the more rapidly because they will be the more violent! are you quite sure that so many starving men will leave you quietly to relish the food whereof you will diminish neither the quantity **nor** the delicacy? . . . No, you will perish, and in the universal conflagration which you do not fear to light, the loss of your honour will not save a single one of your detestable enjoyments. . . . Ah, gentlemen, in reference to a ridiculous disturbance in the Palais-Royal, a laughable insurrection which had no importance save in the feeble imaginations or the perverse designs of a few insincere men, you lately heard these mad words: 'Catiline is at the gates of Rome, and they deliberate!' Whereas, of a certainty, there were near us neither a Catiline, nor perils, nor factions, nor Rome. . . . But to-day bankruptcy, hideous bankruptcy is here; it threatens to consume you, your property, and your honour—and you deliberate!"

This was the weapon of 1789; this rugged, natural, unstudied, and unpremeditated eloquence swayed the spirits of the national representatives, and gave into the orator's hands the guiding of the destinies of France. It was not, however, for long that Mirabeau was able to hold the reins which he had seized. He was already suspected by many on account of his former want of uprightness; he began to be **still** more seriously and generally suspected of a want of

honesty and perfect good faith. There is too much reason to believe that he sold himself to, or at least received money from, the court; and within a year of the Assembly's first meeting his popularity was gone. Barnave took his place, and, from conscientious motives, he pursued the same policy of friendship—or at least of good will—towards the king as Mirabeau had done with more mixed and doubtful views.

Let us present ourselves at a debate of the Assembly in the month of May 1790, and take our stand amidst the surging, vehement, murmuring, irrepressible crowd which filled the gallery of the riding-school to overflowing.<sup>1</sup> If their bearing annoys us, if we shrink from their muttered threats, or are compelled to laugh at their extravagant gestures; if we groan at the over-much emphasis of elbows, feet, and waving arms wherewith they score and underline the declamations of their delegates in the hall beneath, let us remember that we have placed ourselves side by side with the corpse of a giant suddenly recalled to life; that this is not a mere council of the nation, but the nation itself, which has cast off its shackles, which deliberates on its own fortunes, which stands for the first time face to face with its own destiny. Let us remember that this is new France, not the old *régime*; that it is the conscious centre of the world's astonished gaze; that Prussia, Austria, almost every monarchical government in Europe has shown hostility to its proceedings, and even threatened to intervene in French affairs. The occasion of this memorable debate, in which the leading orators of the Constituent Assembly were engaged, was the apprehension of war; not indeed of an aggressive war, such as followed upon the convention of Pillnitz a year or two later, but still a war in which France might have everything to lose, and in which she might find herself opposed to the enemies of her new expectations.

<sup>1</sup> See Gérusez, *Histoire de la littérature française pendant la révolution* ok. 1, ch. i.

A collision appeared to be imminent between England and Spain ; and France was bound—or at least the court-party and some of the ministers declared her bound—by the family compact between Paris and Madrid to take the side of her neighbour. Mirabeau, as we have seen, was already suspected ; and it was now openly averred in the capital that he had connived at the plan of fomenting this quarrel, and of involving his country in the struggle. A portion of the fleet had been fully equipped ; the danger was close at hand ; and thus a grave constitutional question was prematurely forced upon the Assembly. In whom did the responsibility of making war reside—in the king or in the people ? This was the point at issue ; and the violence with which it was debated out of doors found its natural reflection within the Assembly.

The debate whether the king or the Assembly should have the right of declaring war or concluding peace was opened by Charles de Lameth,<sup>1</sup> an aristocrat who had espoused the cause of liberty and popular supremacy, and who, after having been himself a courtier, despised his old associations with as much energy and with more sincerity than Mirabeau. He said—

“I am called upon to prove that if, from the principles of the constitution, it did not result that we ought to retain for the nation the right of peace and war—even if it were a sound principle to leave it to the king, the present circumstances would compel us to set aside this principle. I beg you to reflect in what circumstances and in what manner the difference between Spain and England has arisen ; it is an old cause of war which has been fanned into fresh flame. Yesterday you heard of preparations which are in themselves a declaration of war ; you cannot be ignorant of the connections of Spain : it is well known that our constitution terrifies tyrants : we are aware of the measures which Spain has taken to prevent the writings published in

<sup>1</sup> 1757-1832.

France from reaching that empire. A coalition has been entered into between a power which dreads revolution for itself, between a power which would destroy our constitution, and a family which may be incited by personal considerations. Here is sufficient to make you suspect the motives of this war. . . . If you declare that the king can make war, the constitution will be attacked and perhaps destroyed; the kingdom will be steeped in blood from end to end. If an army assembles, the malcontents created by our justice will take refuge with it. The rich—for it is the rich who constitute the malcontents; they have become rich by abuses, and you have dried up the hateful source of their wealth—the rich will employ every means to extend and nourish the trouble and disorder. But they will not succeed; for if they have gold we have iron, and we shall know how to use it.”

At this confident tone the Assembly shouted with enthusiasm, and the galleries applauded with such vehemence that the business of the meeting was suspended for several minutes. Menou,<sup>1</sup> afterwards the general to whose lot it fell to surrender in Egypt the conquests of Bonaparte, followed, guaranteeing to his hearers a victory over the English. He was succeeded by a well-known speaker in the Assembly, the abbé Maury,<sup>2</sup> of plebeian birth, but still an apologist of the old *régime*, and, in particular, the champion of the Church against the confiscation of her revenues. A man of action, and well fitted to take a leading part in the politics of such a crisis, he was at the same time an orator by taste and training, and had already earned for himself a name both as a preacher and a panegyrist, on the old lines of French classical rhetoric. On the present occasion his argument was of course in favour of reserving to the king the right of making war and peace; and he brought to his task all the advantage which a thorough knowledge of history, carefully manipulated, could give him. The reasons which he brings forward in support of his contention are many and shrewd, though, indeed, they defeat his

<sup>1</sup> 1750-1810.

<sup>2</sup> 1746-1817.



end by the length to which he carries them. In Maury's uncompromising mind, the Assembly itself was but dependent upon the king's authority ; and he doubted whether it had so much as the exclusive privilege of voting subsidies.

“ If reason and the public right of the kingdom are our only oracles here, I need only the king's letters providing for the convocation of the States-General, and the mandates of our constituencies, to show that we do not constitute a national convention, nor even a constituent body, and that all our conquests of authority are usurpations which the French people has never authorised. . . . A generous people is deceived by the most skilful perfidy. I can easily imagine the shameful artifices of a demagogue, but it is certainly not in this Assembly that the fanaticism of popularity will find dupes or accomplices. I say, then, distinctly, that the legislative body, freed from all responsibility, given over to the supremacy of eloquence, to the seductions of gold, to the threats of a misled people, and, above all, to the first emotions of an unreflecting patriotism, could not inspire the nation with so much confidence as a citizen-king ; a king who holds in his hand the clue of all the political relations of the state ; a king who takes in at a glance the dispositions, plans, and means of all the courts ; a king, in short, whose interests will always be inseparable from the public welfare.”

This was eloquence, no doubt, and eloquence of an argumentative and persuasive kind ; though it probably persuaded no man in the Assembly, which listened to it with impatience. Mirabeau took up the word in his more fervid and more persuasive style ; but it was evident that he had lost his old charm. He adopted a middle course between maintaining the right of the king and vindicating the right of the Assembly to decree peace or war ; but it was felt clearly enough that he was pleading the cause of the court. The revulsion against him in the mind of his hearers was instantaneous and general. Camille Desmoulins, his secretary, broke with him then and there. “ It is useless for you to tell me,” he

said, "that you have not received money. I have heard your motion. If you have received it, I despise you ; if you have not received it, that is far worse, I regard you with horror." In contrast with the sinking star of Mirabeau, this debate brings before us the rising star of Barnave.<sup>1</sup> A deputy from the Dauphiné, he had practised as a lawyer in Grenoble, and was a young man full of intellectual force and generosity ; and though a sincere champion of popular liberty, he was well affected towards the royal family. Circumstances brought him into direct rivalry with Mirabeau, against whom he pitted himself in the Assembly ; and he was amongst the first to feel, with an instinct quickened by his rivalry, the insincerity of Mirabeau's position. His speech in the great debate which immediately preceded Mirabeau's fall is perhaps the best he ever delivered. He was less ready than his rival, less vehement, less enthralling ; but his profession had trained him in the arts of the pleader, and his brilliance is that of a fervid and argumentative lawyer. He did not combat point-blank the allegations of Maury and of Mirabeau ; he admitted that the king might often be in a better position to know how and when to make war than a popular assembly ; and he admitted also that a popular assembly might not improbably be carried away by enthusiasm. But of the two evils he chose that which was bound up with the soundest principle ; and the soundest principle was that which sprang out of popular sovereignty.

"The legislature may err ; but it will recover itself, because its opinion is that of the nation ; whilst the minister will err almost always, because his interests are not the same as those of the nation. It is in the interest of a minister that war should be declared, because then we should be forced to give him the handling of the immense subsidies which would be necessary. . . . The legislative body will not readily decide upon making

<sup>1</sup> 1791-1793.

war. Each of us has property, a family, children, a mass of personal interests which war may compromise."

Mirabeau had said that with a royal or ministerial initiative there was at all events a personal responsibility which could be called to account. Barnave shrewdly replies :

"It is vain to allege this responsibility; it is impracticable, absolutely impracticable, so long as the war lasts, for the success whereof the minister who commenced it is necessary. . . . When your fellow-citizens and your brothers have perished, what end will be served by the death of a minister? Doubtless it will offer to the nations a grand example of justice; but will it restore to you that which you have lost? Not only is responsibility impracticable in case of war, but every one knows that the undertaking of war is a fatal method of escaping from a responsibility already incurred, so long as a deficit is still concealed: the minister declares war in order to cover, by pretended expenditure, the results of his depredations. The experience of the people has proved that the best method a clever minister can adopt to hide his crimes is to exact pardon from them by triumphs. We find but too many examples of this, in other countries as well as our own; there was no responsibility when we were slaves. I will only cite one; I take it from the freest people which ever existed. Pericles entered on the Peloponnesian war when he found it impossible to render his accounts: that is responsibility!"

Mirabeau, in his rejoinder, met this illustration brilliantly; and it is an excellent instance of the oratorical art of the greatest rhetorician of the period—

"He (Barnave) has cited the case of Pericles making war in order to avoid rendering his accounts. Would it not appear, from what he said, that Pericles was a king, or a despotic minister? Pericles was a man who, knowing how to flatter the popular passions, and to have himself duly applauded on quitting the tribune, by his bribery, or that of his friends, dragged into the Peloponnesian war—whom? the National Assembly of Athens."

It was during this debate that Mirabeau, feeling that he had been brought to bay before the public opinion of his fellow-citizens, delivered one of his best orations in the Assembly—a bold and fiery rejoinder, but full of the bitterness which presaged defeat. The night before, Barnave had received an ovation from the mob of Paris. Mirabeau, who might have shown more dignity in abstaining from all reference to it, said—after to a great extent withdrawing from the position which he had taken up the day before—

“It is a strange madness, a deplorable blindness, to excite one against the other men whom a single aim, a single indestructible sentiment, ought, amidst the most animated debates, ever to bring together, ever to unite; men who thus substitute the irritation of self-love for love of country, and who give one another over to popular accusation. . . . Me also they were ready, a few days ago, to carry in triumph; and now men are proclaiming in the streets ‘the great treason of the Count de Mirabeau.’ . . . I did not need this lesson to know that there is but a short distance from the Capitol to the Tarpeian rock.”

And presently, in a still more vehement outbreak, in an outburst of oratorical passion which is almost without a rival in the more moderate phases of the earlier Revolution, the falling statesman proudly vindicates his past career, and flings down his last gauntlet to his adversaries:—

“He who is conscious of having deserved well of his country, and above all of being still useful to it; he who does not grasp at a vain notoriety, and who scorns the success of a day in comparison with genuine glory; he who will tell the truth, and who will work for the public good irrespective of popular opinion;—this man carries within him the recompense of his services, the solace of his pains and the reward of his dangers; he need but await his harvest, his destiny—the only one which concerns him—from time, the incorruptible judge who does justice to all. Let those who were eight days ago foretelling my opinion without knowing it, who are now speaking evil



of my speech without understanding it, accuse me of offering incense to impotent idols at the moment when they are overthrown, or of being the base hireling of men whom I have not ceased to combat ; let them denounce as an enemy of the Revolution the man who has, it may be, not been unserviceable to it, and who, even if that Revolution did not redound to his credit, would in it alone find his security ; let them hand over to the fury of the deluded people him who for twenty years has fought against oppressions of every kind, and who spoke to Frenchmen of liberty, of constitution, of resistance, when his base calumniators<sup>1</sup> were sucking the milk of courts, and living amidst all the dominant prejudices. What matters it to me ! These blows from beneath will never check me in my career. I shall say to them : Answer if you can ; and then calumniate as much as you please."

This is noble in form, and it might appear equally noble in fact ; but it is impossible to doubt that Mirabeau was really in the pay of the court. He was poor ; he had betrayed his weakness in a famous aphorism : "petty morality kills the grand morality ;" but surely it must have occurred to him that the crisis was precisely one in which it was a glory to be both great and poor, and a fatal disgrace to become rich through becoming great. He fell, and deserved to fall ; but it may be that the catastrophe to his country was as serious as the catastrophe to himself. Not alone his speeches and his earlier conduct, but his correspondence,<sup>2</sup> and the testimony of his contemporaries, show that he had the necessary gifts of a statesman, and that he might have been strong enough to govern his country well. His weakness lay in his lack of moral purpose and perseverance ; and it was a ruinous weakness for the pilot of a revolution which was before all things moral in its tendency. He did not long survive his discredit, and the universal sorrow displayed upon his death in 1791, at the moment when the country's crisis was at its height,

<sup>1</sup> Mirabeau no doubt here refers to Charles de Lameth.

<sup>2</sup> Especially with Count de la Marck.

proved that, with a happier fate, he might have lived to redeem all that he had lost.

Cazalès,<sup>1</sup> on the "extreme Right" of the National Assembly, though he was as courageous in the expression of his opinions as the abbé Maury, had neither the talent to rival the abbé's eloquence nor the good fortune to please the party for which he so long maintained so unequal a contest. When he was forced at last to follow the earlier aristocratic *émigrés* into exile, he was met with coldness, and denounced as a traitor to his class, apparently for the sole reason that he had sat in the Assembly in the hope of moderating its counsels. He had indeed scarcely attempted to conciliate his colleagues; insisting upon the necessity of a monarchy, the virtues of a dictatorship which should from his own point of view, "silence the laws in order the better to preserve liberty," protesting against the use of the terms "aristocracy" and "democracy," and alleging with too great boldness—and, as events proved, with too little accuracy—that France had become, by the Revolution, the feeblest country in Europe. Few of his speeches remain to us, and these do not attest any considerable oratorical power. But his advocacy of the old *régime* did not rest content with words. He fought a duel with Barnave; and one of the songs of the day bears witness to the disappointment of his friends at its inconclusive result.<sup>2</sup>

## § 2. REPUBLICAN PAMPHLETEERS

We have seen how the ideas of the Revolution were translated into words: let us inquire as to the form which they gave

<sup>1</sup> 1752-1805.

<sup>2</sup> Si Cazalès n'a pas mis Barnave au tombeau,  
C'est qu'il ne peut du ciel éviter la vengeance,  
Et qu'il ne doit point que des mains du bourreau.

to literary documents. Writing is more unfettered, and at the same time more deliberate, than speech ; it is likely to be impressed with a greater genuineness, with less rashness and more impartiality. It is not the off-hand declaration of sentiment poured into the ears of an impatient mob ; and it is produced, as a rule, with the knowledge that the moment of its publication can be chosen at leisure, and the personality of its author, if necessary, concealed. Though, as has been said, the orators stand forth more prominently, between 1789 and the end of the century, than men of letters, still the Revolution was not made without these ; and whether we regard the satirists, the journalists, or the authors of more solid literary work, these few years are very far from being a blank. Amongst the many talkers of the Assembly one man stood out as a silent man *par excellence* ; and it was of him, the abbé Sieyès,<sup>1</sup> that Mirabeau declared his silence to be a public calamity. But if Sieyès could not, or would not speak, he wrote some of the most potent words which proceeded from the mouths of his colleagues ; and of Mirabeau in particular. As a writer Sieyès was bold, logical, direct between the premiss and the conclusion ; as a politician he was circumspect and even timid. One of the few eminent Frenchmen who steered a clear course from the taking of the Bastille to the conferment of dictatorial power upon Napoleon Bonaparte ; a man with scarcely an enemy and without a single intimate friend, it was he who first openly maintained that the Third-Estate of France was the French nation—an idea which it is the distinction of Mirabeau to have converted into its political realisation.

*What is the Third-Estate?* Such was the question which Sieyès undertook to answer in a celebrated pamphlet which appeared in 1789. The Third-Estate, according to the abbé, is, or ought to be, or at the very least might be, everything ;

<sup>1</sup> 1748-1836.

whereas in France it had hitherto been nothing. It is a complete nation in itself; providing the whole rank and file of the army, of the church, of the law, of the administration, of every profession and trade and branch of industry. It was only from the privileged positions in all these spheres that it had been excluded; but it was capable of supplying worthy candidates for any and every post, however exalted. It could dispense with the rest of the nation, but the rest of the nation could not exist without it. Hence it followed that the lofty position from which it was excluded was its by the highest right, whilst the privileged orders were merely usurpers. Doubtless there had been exceptions. Sieyès admits, but makes light of them. "If this exclusion," he proceeds, "is a social crime against the Third-Estate, can it at least be said that it is serviceable to the public good? What! are not the effects of monopoly well known? If it discourages those whom it repels, do we not know that it deteriorates those whom it favours? Do we not know that every work which is exempt from competition will be made more expensively and more indifferently?" Sieyès has no pity on the classes which he proves to be occupying a false position. His logic crushes them, and it is pressed home. "It is enough to have shown that the alleged usefulness of a privileged order in the public service is but a chimera; that without it all that is toilsome in this service is performed by the Third-Estate; that without it the higher positions would be incalculably better filled; that they ought naturally to be the lot and the recompense of recognised talents and services; and that, if the privileged have usurped all lucrative and honourable posts, this is at once a hateful crime against the generality of citizens and a treason to the commonwealth."

We see what must be the practical conclusion from such reasoning; nothing short of the abolition of the useless orders. "If the privileged order were removed, the nation



would not be so much the less, but so much the more. For what is the Third-Estate? Everything, but everything that is fettered and oppressed. What would it be without the privileged order? Everything, but everything that is free and flourishing. Nothing can proceed without it; all would proceed infinitely better without the other." With such a nobility as that of France in 1789, this argument was irresistible; for Sieyès was justified in describing the privileged order in his day as "really a people apart, but a false people, which, being unable for lack of useful organs to exist by itself, has become attached to a real nation, like those vegetable excrescences which can only live by the sap of the plants which they exhaust and dry up." Nevertheless, Sieyès did not actually demand the suppression of the aristocracy. That came soon enough, and mainly by its own fault. The demands of the abbé, in the speech which Arthur Young heard him read in the Assembly on the 15th of June 1789, simply proposed "to declare the assembly the representatives known and verified of the French nation, admitting the right of all absent deputies (the nobility and clergy) to be received among them on the verification of their powers." Mirabeau would have gone further, for Sieyès' formulated proposal did not go as far as his logic. He had, however, done enough; he had substituted the new France for the old.

Sieyès became later on president of the Emperor Napoleon the First's senate, was created count, and died at Paris at the age of eighty-eight years. Wherever he may have drawn the line in his own public actions, he could not draw it for his disciples during the Revolution; and every champion of liberty in France became then his disciple. His treatise did more than anything else to push forward the minds of his countrymen upon the path which had been opened before them; there was not a single ardent patriot who did not feel the full effect of the argument so ably expounded. Privilege

in the state was doomed ; the judgment of the aristocracy was signed, sealed, and delivered ; the absolute monarchy of the Third-Estate was established. The oracle had spoken, the afflatus had been given ; and thenceforth it mattered little that Sieyès, or any one else, should hold his tongue or his pen. There were, indeed, many more who were ready to speak and to write ; and amongst them a fiery, somewhat idealistic, but powerful and courageous advocate of the Republic, Camille Desmoulins ;<sup>1</sup> one of the first men of the age who openly urged his compatriots to dispense with the monarchy. If La Boétie had been born in the eighteenth century, under a hateful tyranny, one of five-and-twenty million victims of a handful of selfish kings and minions, he might have been just such a man. A classical student, who had contracted from the history of ancient Greece and Rome the insatiable thirst for liberty, and the indomitable courage to pursue and to conquer it, who felt the strength of his persuasive powers, and who engrafted his own ardent faith upon the souls of all with whom he came in contact :—such was Camille Desmoulins, who wrote two pamphlets, *Philosophy to the French People* and *Free France*, before the meeting of the States-General, whereto the young lawyer had been sent by the electors of Paris, and wherein he acted for some time as Mirabeau's secretary. More a writer than a speaker, he produced between November 28, 1789, and August 15, 1791, a sort of journal of passing events, issued from time to time in fly-sheets, under the title of *Revolutions of France and Brabant*. His best style almost disappears in these latter productions, which abound in violent invectives, not only against those who hindered the establishment of the Republic, but against such as would have founded it on a basis differing from that which he approved. During the Reign of Terror, himself at last a victim of suspicion and invective, he wrote

<sup>1</sup> 1762-1794.

*The Old Cordelier*, a biting satire in his earlier style, which helped to bring him to the scaffold.

Desmoulins, at his best, is wonderfully strong and nervous; his rhetoric is jerky, full of climax, of insistence and accumulation, pouring along in a rapid stream, carrying his reader breathless to the close of his most declamatory passages. Over and over again the paragraphs of his *Free France* read like the dictation of conditions of surrender to a besieged town. He cries in one place,

"No more magistracy for money, no more nobility for money, no more inherited nobility, no more pecuniary privileges, no more hereditary privileges, no more *lettres de cachet*, no more decrees, no more arbitrary interdicts, no more secret criminal procedure. Liberty of trade, liberty of conscience, liberty to write, liberty to speak. No more oppressive ministers, no more plundering ministers, no more vice-despot intendants, no more judgments by commission, no more Richelieus, no more Terrays, no more Laubardemonts, no more Catherine de Medici, no more Isabellas of Bavaria, no more Charles' the Ninth, no more Louis' the Eleventh, no more shops for place and honour at the Dubarrys and Polignacs. All the dens of thieves shall be destroyed, that of the *rapporteur* and that of the attorney, those of the stock-jobbers and the monopolists, of the auctioneers, and of the sham-brokers. The quashing of the council which has quashed everything. The extinction of the Parliaments which have registered, decreed, torn so much, and been so much my-lorded—let their very name and memory perish. Suppression of the arbitrary tribunal of the marshals of France. Suppression of the tribunals of exception. Suppression of the manorial courts. The same law for everybody. Let all books of feudal jurisprudence, fiscal jurisprudence, jurisprudence of the tithes, jurisprudence of the chase, make up the fire of next St. John's Day. That indeed would be a bonfire, and the grandest ever given to the people. . . . Yes, all this good will come about; yes, this happy revolution, this regeneration will be accomplished; no power on earth is able to prevent it. Sublime result of philosophy, of liberty, and of patriotism! We have become invincible."

It was a fact, and all France perceived it ; for the army shared the popular intoxication, and without a *coup d'état* the people must necessarily be supreme. When the Bastille fell, Desmoulins was one of the first to enter it. On the 4th of August 1789, the duke de Noailles himself proposed the redemption of feudal rights and the suppression of personal services. The duke du Châtelet proposed the conversion of the tithes into a pecuniary tax. The bishop of Chartres proposed the suppression of the exclusive game-laws ; the count de Virieu that of small pigeon-houses and dovecots. Other long-standing abuses shared the same fate ; the nobility and higher clergy, or at least such of them as had not yet deserted their posts, vied amongst themselves in the eagerness with which they stripped themselves of the least just of their ancient privileges.<sup>1</sup>

Desmoulins raises a cry of joy so fervid, so ecstatic, that it deserves to be quoted as being perhaps the most exalted passage of the rhetoric of the Revolution. He writes :

“ ‘ *Hæc nox est,*’ this night we have escaped from our miserable Egyptian bondage. This night has exterminated the wild boars, the rabbits, and all the vermin which devours our crops.<sup>2</sup> This night abolished the tithes and perquisites of the clergy. This night has abolished the annates and dispensations, has taken the keys of heaven from an Alexander VI., and given them to good conscience. . . . O night disastrous to the great chamber, the registrars, the bailiffs, the attorneys, the secretaries, the under-

<sup>1</sup> F. A. Mignet, *Histoire de la révolution française*, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> Writing on the 50th of August 1788, Arthur Young says : “ For a few days past I have been pestered about Orange, Lille, Orléans, &c. &c., with all the mob of the country shooting : one would think that every rusty gun in Provence is at work, killing all sorts of birds ; the shot has fallen five or six times in my chase and about my ears. The National Assembly have declared that every man has a right to kill game on his own land ; and advancing this maxim so absurd as a declaration, though so wise as a law, without any statute or provision to secure the right of the grant to the possessor of the soil, according to the tenor of the vote, have, as I am everywhere informed, filled all the heads of France with sportsmen to a great detriment.”



secretaries, the solicitous beauties, porters, valets, advocates, people of the royal household, all the tribe of rapine! Night disastrous to all the blood-suckers of the state, the financiers, the courtiers, the cardinals, archbishops, abbés, canonesses, abbesses, priors, and sub-priors. . . . But O night delightful, *O verè beata nox*, for a thousand young recluses, Bernardines, Benedictines, Visitandines, when they shall be visited by the Bernardine, Benedictine, Carmelite fathers! . . . O happy night for the merchant, to whom freedom of trade is assured! Happy for the artisan, whose industry is free and his ardour encouraged, who will no longer work for a master, and will himself receive his wages! Happy for the cultivator, whose property returns him at least one-tenth more by the suppression of the tithes and feudal rights! Happy, in short, for all, since the barriers which closed almost every road to honour and employment are forced and broken down for ever, and there exist between Frenchmen no longer any distinctions save those of virtue and talent."

Camille Desmoulins was a literary descendant of the ancient classical historians and orators; and this passage shows him, further, to be a foster-brother of Rabelais. It would have shown it still more distinctly if it had not seemed advisable to omit the most malicious strokes of a pencil which drew for an age more comprehensive in its tastes than the present one. His satire, always trenchant, was sometimes a little too pungent for the nineteenth century; but here is a castigation of the organised tyranny of Robespierre and his fellow Jacobins which has rarely been surpassed. He is overtly describing the condition of Rome under the Cæsars, after the manner of Tacitus; but in reality it is of Paris and the Terrorists that he writes. That, to begin with, is half the satire; the remainder is filled in in detail.

"It was necessary to show joy at the death of a friend, of a relative, if one would not run the risk of perishing oneself. Men feared lest fear itself should render them culpable. Everything gave umbrage to the tyrant. If a citizen was popular, he was

a rival of the prince, who might stir up civil war. Suspected. If on the other hand one eschewed popularity, and clung to one's own fireside, this retired life made you the object of remark ; you had been bidding for consideration. Suspected. Were you rich ; there was imminent danger of the people being corrupted by your bribery. Suspected. Were you poor ; what ! invincible emperor, we must watch this man more closely. There is no intriguer like him who has nothing. Suspected. Were you of a gloomy or melancholy turn, or careless in your dress ; the cause of your dejection was the good state of public affairs. Suspected. If, again, a citizen indulged in high living and indigestions, he was only rejoicing because the emperor had had that attack of gout, which was fortunately a trifle ; we must make him feel that his majesty is still in the vigour of life. Suspected. Was he virtuous and austere in his manners ; good ! A new Brutus, who presumed, by his pallor and his Jacobin's wig to reproach an amiable and well-curled court. Suspected. Was he a philosopher, an orator, or a poet ; it was very becoming to have more renown than those who governed ! Could it be suffered that more attention should be paid to the author on the fourth story than to the emperor in his state-box ? Suspected. And to all these suspected ones the prince sent orders to summon their physician or apothecary and choose, within twenty-four hours, the kind of death that pleased them most. . . . The death of so many commendable citizens seemed a smaller calamity than the insolence and scandalous fortune of their murderers and denounciators. Day by day the informer, sacred and inviolable, made his triumphal entry into the dwellings of the dead, and carried off some valuable inheritance. Denunciation was the only means of getting on in the world. . . . As were the accusers, so were the judges. The tribunals, protectors of life and property, had become butcheries, where what was called punishment and confiscation was but plunder and assassination."

The satirist was not careful to maintain his transparent cloak to the end.

" It is for those who, reading these graphic pictures of tyranny, may have found in them any unhappy resemblance to their own

conduct, to lay them to heart and correct it; for it will never be believed that the portrait of a tyrant, drawn by the hand of the greatest painter of antiquity, and by the historian of philosophers, can have become the life-sketch of Cato and Brutus, and that that which Tacitus called despotism, and the worst of governments, can, eighteen centuries later, be called in our days liberty, and the best of all possible states of existence."

Camille Desmoulins did his best to check the mad rage displayed by the popular leaders in the later phases of the Revolution. He urged the formation of a "Committee of Clemency," as the best means of conciliating parties and putting an end to the public distrust. But he was unable to struggle against the powerful Committee of Public Safety, to whose jealousy and resentment he at length fell a victim. Amongst those who at the same time withstood the excesses of Robespierre,<sup>1</sup> Saint-Just,<sup>2</sup> and their friends, were Fabre d'Eglantine,<sup>3</sup> de Lacroix,<sup>4</sup> and Bourdon de l'Oise,<sup>5</sup> who laboured to bring about a coalition between the Montagne—the ultra-republican party—and the Right in the Assembly, in order to maintain its independence. It was but one of a thousand intrigues of a period during which the possession of power was reserved for the bold and the violent, and whereof the literature is comprised chiefly in the newspapers of the time.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1758-1794. <sup>2</sup> 1767-1794. <sup>3</sup> 1755-1794. <sup>4</sup> 1754-1794. <sup>5</sup> Died in 1797.

<sup>6</sup> To the two or three Parisian journals existing at the beginning of 1789, that year added no less than eighteen, besides minor ephemeral sheets without number. Eight more, of greater or less pretension, were added in 1790; five in 1791, and twelve in 1792. The tempestuous year which succeeded contributed only two papers of note—the *Journal de la Montagne*, written by Laveaux, Thomas Rousseau, and others; and *Le Rougiff* of Geffroy. It is, moreover, a significant literary fact that, of the forty-three newspapers founded in the years 1789-1792, only twelve survived the year 1793. The best written of these short-lived offspring of the Revolution were the two papers already mentioned, edited by Desmoulins; *La Chronique de Paris*, conducted by Condorcet, Millan, Noel, and others; *L'Ami du Peuple*, by Marat; *Le Journal des Débats*, by Barrère, Louvet, and their coadjutors; *L'Orateur du Peuple*, by

## § 3. ROYALIST PAMPHLETEERS.

Rivarol,<sup>1</sup> who for two years conducted the newspaper *Les Actes des Apôtres* in the interest of the monarchy, and who, unpopular as was his cause, added to his work such a charm of wit and brilliancy as to rival the *Revolutions of France and Brabant*, directed his satire at first and chiefly against Mirabeau; and it is characteristic of the great dislocation of ideas and social ties during the epoch of the Revolution that Mirabeau's brother, nicknamed Mirabeau Tonneau,<sup>2</sup> was amongst the fellow-labourers of Rivarol. He was further assisted by Champcenetz,<sup>3</sup> Lally-Tollendal,<sup>4</sup> the Count de Montlosier,<sup>5</sup> and others of minor note; and the gallant band fought for some time with great vigour and effect for the declining cause of monarchy, whose speedy downfall they were not able to foresee or willing to anticipate. It was, once again, the natural French weapon in the hands of Frenchmen, satire of the most delicate kind, alternating with satire of a kind by no means delicate, irony, *persiflage*, innuendo, suggestion which cut and wounded to the quick, and which was more formidable, and consequently more resented, than the most outrageous invective or the most severe logic.

The first number of the *Acts of the Apostles* consisted of "the Introduction," and was published on the 2d of November 1789. Mirabeau is here described under the name of Marcel,

Marat and Fréron, *Le Patriote Français*; by Brissot, *Les Révolutions de Paris*, by Prudhomme; *La Bouche de Fer*, by Anacharsis Clootz; *La Grande Jour du Père Duchêne*, by Hébert; *Le Défenseur de la Constitution*, by Robespierre—all these being Republican;—and *Les Actes des Apôtres*, by Rivarol, Peltier, and their friends; *L'Ami du Roi*, *La Feuille du Jour*, by Parisot; and the *Nouvelles Politiques*, contributed to by Morellet and others—these being Royalist in their tendency.

<sup>1</sup> 1753-1801.<sup>2</sup> 1754-1792.<sup>3</sup> 1759-1794.<sup>4</sup> 1751-1830<sup>5</sup> 1755-1838.



and the picture is an etching in the true style of eighteenth-century art. "A short stature, no dignity of bearing, no grace of attitude, a bilious hue, a corpse-like figure, with haggard eyes, livid cheeks, a twitching mouth, a shaggy brow, bristly hair, a gnarled neck, short arms, legs sadly shrunk, a harsh low voice in the diapason of seductiveness, or horribly resonant in the accents of rage ; this was what drew the gaping mob after him."

Of the Duke d'Orléans<sup>1</sup> the satirist writes: "As extremes meet, and nature delights in contrasts, I am every way induced to believe that Charles the Bad had united his lot with that of an amiable and virtuous princess, but that, strange to the charms of sensibility, he continually prostituted his dignity by the basest excesses ; that the characteristics of the wife, a masterpiece of candour and modesty, formed a complete contrast with the figure, stunted by debauchery, which distinguished her ignoble husband."

Such was the spirit with which Rivarol entered the arena ; and if he did not always fight with a bludgeon, his blows were rarely less vigorous than these. His attack on the Jansenist Camus,<sup>2</sup> an upright though a violent controversialist, whose crimson complexion had earned for him the nickname of *drapreau rouge*, was still more open and bitter.

"The immoderate use of wine, whilst it has weakened the head of M. Camus, has prodigiously coloured his face ; moreover, he has very little wit and a great eagerness to talk ; for, never finding soon enough the foolish things which he wishes to say, and the insult which he is minded to retort, he cannot get rid of his anger, which has necessarily disordered his judgment and inflamed his colour. Finally, he is an outrageous Jansenist, and the heat of intolerance which consumes his soul illumines his face ; it is no wonder, therefore, if he is red, very red, as red as a flag ; but it is the only connection which exists between them,

<sup>1</sup> 1747-1793.

<sup>2</sup> 1740-1804.

and to be convinced of it one need only cast one's eyes on the effects which they produce. The red flag is only unfurled in order to terrify the wicked, to restrain the seditious, to suppress revolts, to restore order, and to preserve the city from pillage, murder, and incendiarianism. M. Camus, on the other hand, only shows himself, acts, and speaks, in order to frighten the good, to create trouble, to sow discord, to increase agitation, to mislead the people, to conduct them to new excesses, and to turn them upon new victims."

Amongst Rivarol's assistants should also be mentioned two lawyers of honest repute and more than respectable ability, whose zeal for king and aristocracy were expressed in elegant phrase, in bold and piquant satire—I mean Suleau<sup>1</sup> and Bergasse.<sup>2</sup> The former, trained to arms, found the profession of the law more congenial to his tastes, and he has left behind him a worthy memorial of his forensic skill in his *Fidélissimae Picardorum genti, or You sleep, Picard, and Louis is in chains*. He was a somewhat indiscriminate satirist; or at all events he would not refrain from occasionally giving a back-handed blow to his friends. In his ingenious reply<sup>3</sup> to Necker's *Projet d'Observation, a Letter to the King concerning the decree of the Assembly upon Titles, Names, and Armorial Bearings*, contesting the minister's view that Louis would not be wise to resist the Assembly, and to destroy the good understanding between it and the king, Suleau attains the height of polished irony. He says—

"As though the king, or rather his council, had not already committed follies enough on his own behalf, and it were necessary for him also to cover those of the Assembly by associating himself therewith by a formal contradiction! . . . I will not speak to you of the king's dignity; we no longer waste time over these trifles; but I suppose that your republican philosophy does not go so far as to dissociate him from the bonds of probity, or from the fetters of delicacy. Now, I will ask you with what

<sup>1</sup> 1757-1792.<sup>2</sup> 1750-1832.<sup>3</sup> *Actes des Apôtres*, ch. 126.

force he would venture, in order to maintain at any price a perfect agreement between himself and the Assembly, to discuss seriously a question of state, which is not, in his eyes, so much as open to discussion? What is this game of connivance, this part of an accomplice, which you would establish between the king and the Assembly, in order irrevocably to despoil a numerous and distinguished class of prerogatives and properties of which he acknowledges both the fitness and the legality? . . . It is, indeed, permitted to the king to believe, but it would be terrible if he were to declare, even implicitly, that the nobility has deserved its fate, first by the inconsistency of its efforts, and again by the meekness of its resignation."

Here is a manifest bitterness towards king and aristocracy; but there is no mistaking for whom the gravity of the irony is intended. It will be, I suppose, needless to say that Suleau did not die in his bed. He was foully massacred by some of the mob of Paris.

Bergasse was opposed to Beaumarchais in the celebrated case of the banker Kornmann, as we have already seen. He was a man of substantial ability and influence, who was returned by Lyons to the States-General, and there cast in his lot with "the Right," but quitted the Parliamentary and Constitutional arena as soon as he found that the Assembly was more liberal than himself. He declared his resolution in eloquent and even convincing terms, which prove everything, except his wisdom in giving up the service of his country. He states—

"I must preserve a disgraceful silence; I must resign the sacred cause of the people, ever the toy of ambitious men who lead it astray, or of tyrants who oppress it. No, no! I will have nothing to do with it; and in order to preserve all my independence of mind, all my courage of resolve, all my force of conscience; in order not to desert like a coward the honourable post of defender to humanity and to liberty, I repeat, in the most solemn manner, that I will never subscribe that portion of your oath

which, loading my opinions with chains, condemning me to a passive obedience, whilst religion exacts but a reasonable obedience, would prevent me from successfully pursuing my favourite studies—the study of morality and of legislation, or, what is the same thing, the study of morality and of liberty.”

Chamfort<sup>1</sup> is hardly a royalist literary man. A foundling, he was, thanks to his wit and his handsome appearance, well received and even patronised by the nobility; and not too severely criticised by the literary men of his day, thanks to some fugitive poetical pieces, two small comedies, some tales, and the praises of Molière and La Fontaine, of which the first was crowned by the French Academy, the other by the Academy of Marseille. When the revolution broke out he embraced its principles with enthusiasm, became the literary adviser of Mirabeau, but found out too late that he had no longer a friend left with sufficient money to give him a sumptuous dinner, or wealthy enough to take him out for a drive. He saw then the error of his ways, repented, and was going to be arrested, when he attempted to kill himself first with a pistol, and then by slashing himself with a razor. He lingered for some time, and it is said might have been cured if it had not been for the imprudence of his doctor, who succeeded in doing for Chamfort what he seems not to have been able to do for himself, namely, to kill him efficaciously. His wit, which shines chiefly in his sayings, is that of a misanthropical egotist, for, to quote his own maxim, “in frequenting men the heart must either break or become hardened.”

<sup>1</sup> 1741-1794.



## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. LITERATURE DURING THE REIGN OF TERROR.

WHEN the most violent storms of the Revolution had passed away, La Harpe<sup>1</sup> sat down and wrote in his *Memoirs* as follows:—

“It seems to me but yesterday, and yet it was in the beginning of 1788. We were at table, in the house of one of our colleagues at the Academy, a gentleman of high position and a man of wit. The company was numerous and varied—courtiers, lawyers, men of letters, Academicians. We had been well treated, according to the wont of our host. At dessert the wines of Malmsey and Constance added to our well-bred cheerfulness that sort of liberty which does not always maintain the well-bred tone. Men had then arrived at the point at which everything is forgiven if it leads to a laugh. Champfort had read to us his impious and libertine stories, and the ladies of distinction had listened without even resorting to their fans. Then followed a flood of jests upon religion. One quoted a tirade from the *Pucelle*, another repeated certain philosophical verses of Diderot. . . . One alone of the guests had taken no part in all this lively conversation. . . . It was Cazotte, a pleasant and original man, but unfortunately infatuated by the dreams of the *illuminati*. He began to speak, in the most serious tone: ‘Gentlemen,’ said he, ‘be content; you will all see this great revolution which you desire so much. You know that I am something of a prophet, and I repeat that you will see it. . . . Do you know what will

<sup>1</sup> 1739-1803.

come of this revolution, what will happen to all of you that are here?' 'Ah, let us hear,' said Condorcet, with his sly and simple smile; 'a philosopher is not sorry to come across a prophet.' 'You, Monsieur de Condorcet, will die on the pavement of a prison-cell; you will die of poison which you will have taken to escape the executioner, of poison which the luck of that time will compel you to carry always with you.' At first there was great astonishment; then they laughed with the utmost gaiety. 'What may all this have in common with philosophy and the reign of reason?' 'It is exactly as I tell you; it is in the name of philosophy, of humanity, of liberty, it is under the reign of reason that you will end thus; and it will be veritably a reign of reason, for it will have temples, and indeed there will be no other temples in all France at that time save those of reason. . . . You, Monsieur de Champfort, you will cut your veins with two-and-twenty strokes of a razor, and yet you will only die months afterwards. You, Monsieur Vicq d'Azyr, will not open your veins yourself, but you will have them opened six times in one day, in the midst of an attack of gout, to be the more sure of your death; and you will die in the night. You, Monsieur de Nicolaï, on the scaffold; you, Monsieur Bailly, on the scaffold; you, Monsieur de Malesherbes, on the scaffold; . . . you, Monsieur Roucher, also on the scaffold.' 'O, then, we shall be worsted by the Turks and Tartars?' 'Not at all; as I have said, you will then be governed by philosophy and reason alone. They who will treat you thus will be all philosophers, will continually have in their mouths the phrases you have been uttering for an hour past; they will repeat all your maxims, will quote like you the verses of Diderot and the *Poëte*.' 'And when will all this happen?' 'Six years will not pass before all that I have told you is accomplished.' 'Here are plenty of miracles,' said La Harpe, 'and you do not put me down for anything.' 'You will come in for a miracle at least as extraordinary; you will then be a Christian.' 'Ah,' replied Champfort, 'I am relieved; if we are only to die when La Harpe is a Christian, we are immortal.' 'For one reason,' then said the Duchess de Gramont, 'we women are very fortunate not to count for anything in revolutions. It is an axiom that they take no trouble about us and our sex.' . . . 'Your sex, ladies, will not protect you this time.

. . . You will be treated just like men, with no distinction whatever. . . . You, Madame la Duchesse, will be led to the scaffold, you and many other ladies with you, in a cart, with your arms tied behind you.' 'Ah, I hope, in that case, that I shall at least have a carriage draped in black.' 'No, madame, greater ladies than yourself will go like you in a cart, their hands bound behind them.' 'Greater ladies! what! princesses of the blood?' 'Greater ladies still.' . . . They began to find the jest a little strong. Madame de Gramont, in order to dissipate the cloud, did not dwell upon this last reply, and contented herself with saying in a lighter tone: 'You will see he does not mean to leave me so much as a confessor.' 'No, madame, you will not have one, you nor any one else; the last victim who will have one as a favour will be' . . . He paused for a moment. 'Well, then, who is the happy mortal who will have this privilege?' 'It is the only privilege which will remain to him, and that man will be the king of France.'"

The fiction is graphic enough to be true; for the events here recorded in the shape of predictions are but sober facts. The drama of the revolution ended in blood; and amongst the victims of the Reign of Terror were more than one man of letters from whom the world had already received much, and might, if they had lived, have received infinitely more. The new order, dawning in violence, was not to be established without many a shock; and literature, which was to reap so rich a harvest from the new emancipation, was first of all to be checked in its course, not only by the persecution and death of its votaries, but also by the partial eclipse of letters behind the constellation of social and political ideas, which passed from conception to action without pausing for the mediation of written words. The world owes special recognition to an author who dies young, whatever may be the cause of his death. The bough that is snapped might have grown straight; Apollo's wreath might have budded into its expected glories; and, at all events, that which Adonaïs has done is seldom the best of which he was capable. The French Revolution had

its Adonaïs in André Chénier,<sup>1</sup>—"the young swan who died strangled by its bloody hands."<sup>2</sup> As for La Harpe, he escaped with his conversion ; but one of his fellow-guests in the mythical supper, Roucher,<sup>3</sup> author of a mediocre, or at least unequal poem, on *The Months*, rode to his death upon the same tumbril with the younger Chénier. La Harpe had no mercy on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whilst the earth had scarcely settled upon his coffin ; he had hardly more for Roucher, who had helped to feed the guillotine. Roucher had been faithful to ideas of which La Harpe had purged himself ; and the latter could not refrain from the pleasure of pointing out, in more than a hundred octavo pages, read in the Lycée, how egregiously the author of *The Months* violated some of the commonest rules of poetry, how he murdered his Alexandrines, and suffered his verses to trample each other to death. Yet Roucher undoubtedly had the soul of a poet, and the lines which he sent from Saint-Lazare to his wife and children, written under his portrait, bear sufficient testimony to the fact.<sup>4</sup>

It was on the 25th of July 1794 (the seventh Thermidor of the second year of the Republic) that Roucher and André Chénier met their death. The latter, who was then in his thirty-first year, had hardly printed a line, and his poems were only published for the first time in 1819. But amongst his friends he already had a reputation ; they had seen much that he had written, and expected great things of him. He was born at Constantinople, being the third son of the Consul-General of France in Turkey. His mother was a witty and beautiful Greek, Santi-Lhomaka, whose sister was the grandmother of M. Thiers. Educated in France, first under the

<sup>1</sup> 1762-1794.    <sup>2</sup> H. De Latouche, *Notice sur A. Chénier*.    <sup>3</sup> 1745-1794.

<sup>4</sup> " Ne vous étonnez pas, objets sacrés et doux,  
Si quelque air de tristesse obscurcit mon visage ;  
Quand un savant crayon dessinait cette image,  
J'attendais l'éclatant, et je pensais à vous."



care of an aunt in Languedoc, then at the college of Navarre, he displayed great taste for classical studies, the effects of which are abundantly manifest in his poetical remains. One of his earliest independent efforts was to translate a poem of Sappho into French verse. After commencing and immediately tiring of a military career, he came up to Paris in 1784, and at once found congenial friends in such men as the painter David,<sup>1</sup> the chemist Lavoisier,<sup>2</sup> the poet Lebrun,<sup>3</sup> the critic Palissot,<sup>4</sup> and the chevalier de Pange.<sup>5</sup> His ambition was simply to know all that could be known; he had a soul, but not a body equal to the task, even if his fate had smiled on his courage. At the age of twenty-two, a few months after his arrival in Paris, he had a severe illness, on recovering from which he spent some months in Switzerland, in the company of his old school-fellows, the brothers Trudaine. Restored to health, he went to England as secretary to the Count de la Luzerne, the French ambassador at St. James's; but unable to live in London,<sup>6</sup> he passed two or three years in travelling, and finally settled in Paris at the age of twenty-eight. From this

<sup>1</sup> 1748-1825.<sup>2</sup> 1743-1794.<sup>3</sup> 1729-1807.<sup>4</sup> See bk. vi. ch. iii. § 2.<sup>5</sup> 1764-1796

<sup>6</sup> André Chénier seems not to have had any great predilection for England. After a very poetical description of sea-sickness (*Poésies diverses*, iii.), he finds himself in London without friends or acquaintances, "auprès d'un noir foyer, seul, je me plains du sort," and then breaks out against the English "nation toute à vendre à qui peut la payer," and against the English youth whom we see

"Au sortir du gymnase ignorante et rustique,  
De contrée en contrée aller au monde entier  
Offrir sa joie ignoble et son faste grossier."

Even the English poets

"Trop fiers pour être esclaves,  
Ont même du bon sens rejeté les entraves."

And what is worse, they are

"Du génie étranger détracteurs ridicules  
D'eux mêmes et d'eux seuls admirateurs crédules . .  
Tristes . . . enflés . . . sombres et pesants."

But then "their sky is always full of clouds," and their "île farouche" surrounded by fogs.

time poetry absorbed more and more of his enthusiasm ; and he worked upon the ancient Greek model, without for a moment suffering his literary taste to distract him from his attachment to the new ideas of his age and his fatherland. These ideas he sought to embody in the verses which were at once the occupation and the solace of his existence, and which his modesty scarcely permitted him to show to his most intimate friends. The elegiac style especially attracted him ; he was the Chatterton and the Keats of France ; but he was at the same time an enthusiast for liberty, and he soon threw himself into the vortex, from which he was only to escape by death. Associating himself with Roucher, de Pange and others, he wrote much in the *Journal de Paris*, which took a bold tone against the tendency to anarchy on the one hand and to aristocratic reaction on the other, which were already clearly manifesting themselves.

His younger brother, Marie-Joseph,<sup>1</sup> was likewise a child of the Revolution ; but his ideas were not entirely in harmony with those of André. He became a member of the most violent of the clubs of Paris, the *Friends of the Constitution*, afterwards better known, more powerful, and more sanguinary, under the title of the *Jacobins*, and of which Robespierre was the most notorious leader. André condemned his brother's association with the most extreme section of the citizens, and the latter presently saw that he was being carried too far, and withdrew from the club. It was almost their only serious difference, and it has been magnified into a quarrel dishonouring to the memory of both. But if André was more moderate in his views than the younger brother, he

However, in his hymn *A la France*, Chénier says—

“ Vois le superbe Anglais, l'Anglais dont le courage  
Ne s'est soumis qu'à un loi d'un sens libre et sage,  
Qui l'épie, et, dans l'Inde éclipsant sa splendeur  
Sur tes fautes sans nombre élève sa grandeur.”

<sup>1</sup> 1764-1811.

was at least rash in the expression of his own. He extolled Charlotte Corday,<sup>1</sup> the assassin of Marat ;<sup>2</sup> he attacked Collot d'Herbois<sup>3</sup> and Robespierre, and made enemies who only waited their opportunity of revenge. He was more chivalrous still, and, whilst the nobility fled from Paris he sought and obtained from Malesherbes the task of attending upon the king in his prison. When Louis asked from the Assembly which had condemned him the right of appeal to the people, it was André Chénier who wrote the text of the letter.<sup>4</sup> His courage brought him into imminent danger, and at length he was persuaded to quit the capital. He passed some time at Rouen and Versailles, maintaining a most affectionate correspondence with his brother, who was at this moment engaged upon his dramas.

At Versailles André Chénier might have lived in comparative peace until the storm had passed ; but he fell a victim to an unfortunate act of generosity. A friend of his had been arrested at Passy ; he hastened thither to condole with the family ; and whilst he was in the house certain officers came to search for papers. Without warrant or authority of any kind they arrested Chénier on suspicion, and he was taken to the prison of Saint-Lazare, at Paris. In the Conciergerie at the same time was one of his elder brothers, Sauveur de Chénier, who happily survived the thirst for blood. It has been imputed to Marie-Joseph that he connived at, or was at least indifferent to, his brother's fate. Nothing could be more improbable, and by this time the idea has been thoroughly exploded.<sup>5</sup> Their own affectionate correspondence, the evidence of their friends, the bearing of their parents towards both, are more than sufficient to dismiss the reproach from the consideration of the present age. Marie-Joseph, though a deputy for Versailles, had for some time

<sup>1</sup> 1768-1793.      <sup>2</sup> 1744-1793.      <sup>3</sup> 1750-1796.      <sup>4</sup> January 17, 1793.

<sup>5</sup> See H. De Latouche, *Poésies de André Chénier*, preliminary memoir.

kept studiously away from the Convention. He had become unpopular in the tribune, and he was a special object of Robespierre's hatred. It would have been worse than useless for him to appeal to the men in power for his brother's life, and he had the high courage to abstain from a course which would certainly have hastened André's fate. Their parents were less prudent, or less able to restrain themselves. Chénier's father wearied the Convention with prayers for the life of his son, not perceiving that the greatest kindness which could be shown to a prisoner, under the Reign of Terror, was to let him sink into oblivion. One of the judges replied to his entreaty : " What ! is it because he bears the name of Chénier, because he is the brother of a representative, that for six months he has not been put upon his trial ? Go, sir, your son shall come out in three days." And when the old man boasted to his friends of his success, one of them said : " May you never repent of your tenderness." The promise was sternly kept. André appeared before the tribunal, and would not condescend to speak one word. He was declared an enemy of the people, convicted of having written against liberty and defended tyranny, and condemned to death. He was one of the latest victims of the Terror ; for on the day next but one succeeding his execution, Henriot and his friends brought the tyranny of Robespierre to a close. With Chénier died de Montalembert, de Montmorency, the Baron von Trenck, Loiserolles, Roucher, and others—thirty-eight in all. When the young poet saw his former colleague of the *Journal de Paris*, he cried : " You ! the most irreproachable of our citizens ! a father, a beloved husband ! Are they sacrificing you ! " And Roucher in his turn : " You ! virtuous youth ! They are taking you to death, bright with genius and hope ! " " I have done nothing for posterity," sighed Chénier ; and then, touching his forehead, he muttered, " Yet I had somewhat there."



By good fortune, the portfolios which he had left behind him in Saint-Lazare, contained his poems. A few of these possess exceeding beauty, and are full of the pathos of anticipated death.<sup>1</sup> What could be more touching than that ode of "The Young Captive," written from his prison?

"The wheat, while still unripe, the sickle spares;  
No vat, the tender vine, through summer fears,  
But drinks the morning dews.  
And I, as lovely and as young as he  
Although some present pain and toil may be,  
To die so soon refuse. . . .

"Is it for me to die, who peaceful sleep,  
And peaceful wake! who never learnt to weep  
As yet by night or day.  
Whose very sight makes all beholders glad,  
And in this dismal place, brows dark and sad  
Can almost change to gay?

"So far is life's bright pathway from its end,  
That the first tree of all that o'er it bend  
Its shade still round me throws.  
Scarce has as yet begun life's joyous feast;  
My eager lips have but the goblet prest,  
Which in my hand o'erflows. . . .

"O Death, you need not haste!—begone! begone!  
Go solace hearts that shame and fear have known  
And hopeless woes beset.  
For me Pales still has his grassy ways,  
Love has its kisses, and the Muse her lays;  
I will not die as yet."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Avant le soir se clôra ma journée."

<sup>2</sup> "L'épi naissant mûrit de la faux respecté  
Sans crainte du pressoir, le pampre tout l'été  
Boit les doux présents de l'aurore;  
Et moi, comme lui belle, et jeune comme lui,  
Quoi que l'heure présente ait de troubles et d'ennui,  
Je ne veux pas mourir encore. . . .

The "young captive" whose complaints André Chénier here gives expression to was Mademoiselle de Coigny, the "blanche et douce colombe" of another ode; but no doubt André had precisely the same thoughts on his own behalf, as well as some that were more bitter. Thus he appeals, from the prison, to Justice and Truth:—

"Save me! Preserve one arm  
To hurl your thunderbolt.—One lover, sworn  
To wreak full vengeance for each harm,  
By thee, my country, borne:  
What? die before my quiver all is spent?  
Till I have mangled, rent,  
Trod under foot and kneaded into clay  
Those ruffians who with justice play,  
Those shameless tyrants who would France destroy,  
France! murdered, butchered, France! O thou my joy,  
My scathing pen! Gall, fury, deathless hate,  
(Until revenge I sate)  
You are my only Gods; henceforth  
For you alone to live has any worth."

There was much of promise in the longer poems, or, at all

"Est-ce à moi de mourir? Tranquille je m'endors,  
Et tranquille je veille, et ma veille aux remords  
Ni mon sommeil ne sont en proie.

Ma bienvenue au jour me vit dans tous les yeux;  
Sur des fronts adonnés, mon aspect dans ces lieux  
Ranime presque de la joie.

"Mon beau voyage encore est si loin de sa fin!  
Je pars, et des orneaux qui bordent le chemin  
J'ai passé les premiers à peine.

Au banquet de la vie à peine commencé,  
Un instant seulement mes lèvres ont pressé  
La coupe en mes mains encor pleine. . . .

"O mort! tu peux attendre; éloigne, éloigne-toi;  
Va consoler les cœurs que la honte, l'effroi,  
Le pâle désespoir dévore.

Pour moi l'Alce encore à deux oses verra,  
Les Amours des baisers, les Muses des concerts;  
Je ne veux pas mourir encore."

events, the sketches and attempts at longer poems, which Chénier had produced before his imprisonment rendered all sustained effort impracticable. Sainte-Beuve appreciated Chénier; and in his notes upon the fragments of *Hermès*, in which the young poet spread his wings with the hope of reaching the level of Lucretius, the critic does full justice to the materials upon which his judgment was formed, without exaggerating the merit of what was but a preliminary sketch. "André,"<sup>1</sup> he says, "by the collection of his known poems, shows himself, anterior to 1789, as especially the poet of pure art and of pleasures, as the man of ancient Greece and of elegy. It would seem that before this moment of public explosion and danger, when he threw himself so generously into the strife, he lived somewhat behind the ideas and the favourite utterances of his time, and that, whilst he shared in them as far as concerns results and habits, he did not engage in them with ardour and premeditation. It would, however, be a great mistake to consider him so disinterested an artist; and *Hermès* shows him to have been as fully and as warmly a man of his age, after his own fashion, as Raynal or Diderot could have been. The doctrine of the eighteenth century was, at bottom, materialism, or pantheism, or perhaps naturism, as it would be called; it had its philosophers, and even its poets in prose, Boulanger, Buffon; it was to evoke its Lucretius. . . . Le Brun attempted the task after Buffon; Fontanes, in his early youth, essayed it seriously, as is attested by two fragments, whereof one has real beauty. André Chénier pushed farther forward than any one, and by the vigour of his ideas as by that of his pencil, he was well worthy of producing a true didactic poem in the high sense." The fragments of *Hermès* are very unconnected, and what may be called the decorative passages are more elaborated than the philosophical; so that an extract would hardly do justice to Chénier's

<sup>1</sup> *Portraits*, vol. v.

idea, which, as far as I can understand it, is grand rather in its decoration than in its philosophy.

Amongst the martyrs of liberty who fell victims to the frenzy of the Parisian mob or of their leaders, and who have a special claim to be mentioned in a literary record of the time, was Jean-Sylvain Bailly,<sup>1</sup> a genuine friend of liberty, who longed as ardently as any for the establishment of the new order, and who, avoiding the extremes of either side, incurred danger from both. It is an eternal disgrace to men like Rivarol and other champions of loyalty that they did not hesitate to hold up obnoxious men to the vengeance of the mob, whose excesses they were bound, from their own point of view, indiscriminately to condemn.<sup>2</sup> Bailly, La Fayette,<sup>3</sup> and many other men of liberal tendencies were thus significantly pointed out to the mob as fitting objects of their lawless severity. Bailly's turn came in due time. It was raining when he was being led to execution. "You tremble, Bailly," said one of the officers. "I tremble, my friend," said Bailly, "but it is because I am cold." As a man of letters he is honourably known as the author of a *History of Astronomy*. Vergniaud,<sup>4</sup> one of the leading spirits of the Girondin party, an orator second in parliamentary eloquence of the higher kind to Mirabeau alone, laboured hard to moderate the passions of the time, and to hold a middle course between the excesses of the Republicans and the reactions of the Royalists. He did not, like Chénier and La Fayette, seek to retain the throne. He saw that, for a time at least, it was impossible; and he did not believe that Louis XVI. was sincere in the

<sup>1</sup> 1736-1793.

<sup>2</sup> Take an instance from the *Actes des Apôtres*, a special offender in this sense. In the epilogue to lib. 241 we read:

"Tribun municipal,  
Sylvain finira mal;  
Et Écharpe de maire

Par un vœu populaire  
Sera bientôt, j'espère,  
Converti en lion."

1757-1834.

<sup>4</sup> 1733-1793.



compromises which he had made with the Assembly. In a celebrated speech,<sup>1</sup> Vergniaud puts into the king's mouth an apology for his conduct, and then proceeds to controvert its arguments with no little skill, and with all the vigour of manifest sincerity. He represents Louis as saying

"It is true that the enemies who are tearing France to pieces allege that they act thus only to raise my authority which they consider to be destroyed, to avenge my dignity which they suppose to be tarnished, to restore my rights which they imagine to be compromised ; but I have proved that I was not their accomplice. I have obeyed the Constitution which bids me oppose their enterprises by a formal act, for I have sent armies into the field. It is true that these armies were too weak ; but the Constitution does not define the degree of force which I ought to give them. It is true that I called them out too late ; but the Constitution does not define the time at which I ought to call them out. It is true that camps of reserve might have supported them ; but the Constitution does not oblige me to form camps of reserve. . . . It is true that the National Assembly passed useful or even necessary decrees, and that I refused to sanction them ; but I had the right to do so ; it is a sacred right, for I derive it from the Constitution. It is true, in fine, that the counter-revolution has been formed, that despotism is about to restore to me its iron sceptre, that I will crush you with it, that you are about to fawn upon me, that I shall punish you for the insolence of wishing to be free ; but I have done all that the Constitution prescribes, no act has come from me that the Constitution condemns. It is therefore inadmissible to doubt my fidelity to it, my zeal for its defence."

What Vergniaud conveyed was that Louis had suffered the Assembly to exhibit its weakness, to become the prey of the violent and the selfish, to become abortive by the excesses of the mob, in order that the natural reaction in favour of public security might sooner or later lead to the restoration

<sup>1</sup> July 3, 1792.

of his own authority. He then apostrophises the king in a passage of terrible force :—

“O King, who doubtless believed, with the tyrant Lysander, that truth was no stronger than falsehood, and that men must be amused with oaths as we amuse children with playthings ; who pretended to love the laws only to preserve the power which would enable you to defy them ; the Constitution only that it might not hurl you from the throne where you wished to remain in order to destroy it ; the nation, only to assure the success of your perfidies by inspiring it with confidence ! do you think to abuse us now by hypocritical protestations ? Do you think to put us off the track about the cause of our misfortunes by the artifice of your excuses and the audacity of your sophistries ? Was it to defend us that you opposed to foreign soldiers forces whose inferiority left not even a doubt of their defeat ? Was it to defend us that you set aside the plans tending to strengthen the country at home, or prepared resistance against the time when we should have become the prey of tyrants ? Was it to defend us that you did not check a general who was violating the Constitution, but fettered the courage of those who were serving it ? Was it to defend us that you ceaselessly paralysed the government by the continual disorganisation of the ministry ? Did the Constitution leave to you the choice of ministers for our good or for our ruin ? Did it make you head of the army for our glory or our shame ? Did it, in short, give you the right of sanction, a civil list, and so many great prerogatives, that you might constitutionally destroy the Constitution and the Empire ? No, no. Man whom the generosity of Frenchmen could not move, man whom the love of despotism alone could render sensitive ! you have not fulfilled your constitutional vows. It may be that the Constitution is overturned, but you will not reap the fruit of your perjury ! You did not oppose by a formal act the victories which were won in your name against liberty, but you will not gather the fruit of these unworthy triumphs ! You are no longer anything to this constitution which you have so unworthily violated, for this people which you have so basely betrayed !”

It was not many days after this outbreak of inspired passion,

on the 11th of July, that the Assembly declared the fatherland in danger, and sent the regular troops away from Paris. The manifesto of the duke of Brunswick was published on the 25th of the same month. On the 13th of the following month the king was incarcerated in the Temple, which he only left to perish on the scaffold.<sup>1</sup> When the September massacres took place there were none who protested more indignantly than the Girondins, than Vergniaud himself, who repeated on many subsequent occasions the fervid declamations by which his oratory is distinguished. Buzot,<sup>2</sup> Gensonné,<sup>3</sup> Guadet,<sup>4</sup> friends and colleagues of Vergniaud, belonged to the same political party, and took the tone of their eloquence from their leader. Madame Roland<sup>5</sup> has left us spirited descriptions of them all. Of Buzot she says: "An impassioned student of nature, feeding his imagination on all the charms which it can present, his soul with principles of the most touching philosophy, he seems made to enjoy and to obtain domestic happiness. . . . The generality of men, who depreciate what they cannot attain to, treat his penetration as raving, his warmth as passion, his powerful ideas as diatribes, his opposition to every kind of excess as a revolt against the majority. He was accused of royalism, because he pretended that morals were necessary in a republic, and that nothing ought to be neglected to obtain or improve them; of calumniating Paris, because he abhorred the massacres of September, and attributed them merely to a handful of cut-throats hired by brigands; of aristocratic leanings, because he would have summoned the people to the exercise of its sovereignty in the trial of Louis XVI.; of federalism, because he demanded the maintenance of equality between all the departments, and protested against the municipal tyranny of a usurping commune. These were his crimes."

<sup>1</sup> January 21, 1793.<sup>2</sup> 1760-1794.<sup>3</sup> 1758-1793.<sup>4</sup> 1758-1794.<sup>5</sup> 1754-1793.

They were the crimes of André Chénier, of Guadet, and Gensonné, and of the Girondists as a party. "Guadet and Gensonné," Madame Roland says again, "love each other, perhaps because they do not resemble each other. The latter is as cold as the former is impetuous, but the flashes of his ardent vivacity are never followed by bitterness, and the intention to offend is far from his mind. Nature made Guadet an orator; Gensonné made himself a logician; the one often loses in deliberation the time which he should employ in action; the other dissipates in happy actions, but short and transitory, a warmth which ought sometimes to be concentrated, and always to be more sustained, in order to produce a durable effect. . . . Gensonné, useful in discussion, which, nevertheless, it is his failing to protract too long, has laboured upon committees, and revised a part of the plan of a proposed constitution. His speech upon the king is relieved by passages of that sarcasm which is rendered keen by an apparent coldness, and which the men of the Mountain will never forgive him."

Let us take one more picture from Madame Roland, that of another member of the Girondist party, and one of its best orators, Louvet,<sup>1</sup> first the friend, then the resolute and courageous opponent of Robespierre, who nevertheless found it necessary to flee before the coming storm, and who by that means only contrived to cheat the guillotine. "Short, spare, of mean appearance and negligent habit, he seems a nobody to ordinary people, who do not remark the nobility of his brow, and the fire which lights up his eyes and his face at the expression of a great truth, of a fine sentiment, of an ingenious sally, or of a refined joke. It is impossible to unite more wit to less pretensions and to more good nature; courageous as a lion, simple as a child, he can make Catiline tremble in the tribune, hold the pen of history, or scatter the

<sup>1</sup> 1760-1797.



tenderness of his soul over the life of a beloved woman.' The praise is a trifle over-done; and at any rate, Louvet is responsible for one of the worst books<sup>1</sup> emanating from a writer of the revolutionary period.

Madame Roland, from whose *Memoirs* I have quoted one or two graphic sketches of the men of her time, which are in themselves sufficient to show the acuteness of her observation, if nothing more, was a striking figure in a remarkable epoch. Of obscure birth, but endowed with faculties which she lost no opportunity of cultivating, she displayed an uncommon ability, first in the convent school to which she had been sent, then in the workshop of her father, Gratien Philpon, an engraver, amongst whose workmen she more than held her own. Her husband was a member of the Girondin ministry appointed by Louis XVI. in the last month of 1791, when he felt himself compelled to have recourse to the Left of the Legislative Assembly: Dumouriez having charge of foreign affairs, and Roland of the interior. "A man worthy of being born in a republic," as Mignet says,<sup>2</sup> "but out of place in a revolution, and scarcely fitted for the agitations and strifes of parties, his talents were not of a superior order, and his character was somewhat stiff; he could neither read nor handle men; and though he was laborious, enlightened, active, he would have made little mark save for his wife. All that he needed she possessed for him—force, cleverness, elevation, foresight. Madame Roland was the soul of the Gironde; around her those brilliant and courageous men were wont to gather, in order to discuss the needs and dangers of the country; it was she who stimulated those whom she knew to be fit for action, and urged to the tribune those whom she knew to be eloquent." According to the

<sup>1</sup> *Les amours du Chevalier de Faublas*. Louvet was, however, not thirty years old when he wrote this obscene book.

<sup>2</sup> F. A. Mignet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, ch. v.

testimony of some at least of her contemporaries, she did a good deal more than this. The newspaper *le Moniteur* spoke of her, on the occasion of her death, in these terms:—“The woman Roland, a great wit in little schemes, a philosopher on notepaper, the queen of a moment, surrounded by hireling writers, to whom she gave suppers, distributing favours, places, and money, was a monster in every respect. Her scornful face towards the people and the judges chosen by them, the haughty obstinacy of her replies, her ironical gaiety, and the firmness which she paraded in going from the Palace of Justice to the Place of the Revolution, prove that no painful recollections engaged her mind. Yet she was a mother; but she had sacrificed nature in her desire to rise above it; the wish to be learned led her to forget the virtues of her sex, and her forgetfulness, always dangerous, ended by causing her to die upon the scaffold.” She perished amidst the slaughter of her party, on the 8th of November 1793, about four weeks after Marie Antoinette. Vergniaud, Brissot,<sup>1</sup> Gensonné, twenty-one in all of the Girondin leaders, were led to the scaffold on the 31st of October, chanting the Marseillaise. Guadet and others of the party were executed at Bordeaux; Buzot and Pétion<sup>2</sup> died by their own hands, after wandering through the country, and their corpses were found some time later, half devoured by wolves. Condorcet<sup>3</sup> took poison to escape the guillotine. M. Roland<sup>4</sup> himself, who had been proscribed, and fled from Paris, hearing of the condemnation and death of his wife, also fell by his own hand.

The woman to whose Roman strength of mind her greatest enemies bore witness said proudly, a few hours before her death: “I shall quit this world in the confidence that the memory of my calumniators will be buried in maledictions, whilst mine will some day be recalled with tender-

<sup>1</sup> 1754-1793.<sup>2</sup> 1753-1794.<sup>3</sup> 1743-1794.<sup>4</sup> 1734-1793.

ness." Her bearing towards the close of her life is thus described by one of those who had an opportunity of observing it<sup>1</sup>:—"Madame Roland had a republican soul in a body moulded by the graces, and adorned by a certain courtly politeness. Something more than is generally found in the eyes of women was seen in her large black eyes, full of expression and sweetness; she often spoke to us at the prison-grating with the freedom and courage of a great man. This republican language coming from the mouth of a pretty Frenchwoman, for whom the scaffold was being prepared, was a marvel of the revolution to which we were not accustomed. We were all attention around her, in a sort of admiration and stupor. Her conversation was serious without being cold; she expressed herself with a purity, a measure, and a rhythm, which made of her language a music whereof one could never have too much. She spoke of the deputies who had just perished, never save with respect, but without womanish pity, and reproached them for not having taken strong enough measures; she usually called them 'nos amis,' she frequently sent for Clavière<sup>2</sup> to talk with him. Sometimes, too, her sex took the upper hand, and it was remarked that she wept at the thought of her daughter and her husband. This mixture of natural softness and of strength rendered her more interesting."

I certainly prefer this account of Madame Roland to that which appeared in the *Moniteur*, and it will be admitted that it is at all events more likely to be true. In fact her literary remains, little as they contain of womanly weakness, bear out the more favourable view of her character expressed by Riouffe. The remains in question consist merely of the

<sup>1</sup> Riouffe (1764-1813), in his *Memoirs*, published in 1795.

<sup>2</sup> (1735-1793.) A Swiss financier and politician, who settled in France, became afterwards minister of finance, and killed himself at the moment of appearing before the revolutionary tribunal.

correspondence of a busy and honourably active life, and of the *Memoirs* which her gaolers gave her the means of committing to paper. Both *Memoirs* and correspondence exhibit her as a woman of lofty and punctilious honour, nobly faithful to her husband, who was old enough to be her father, and sincerely attached to her friends, to whom she often showed the softer side of her character in the most charming and natural traits. To one of these latter, Sophie Cannet, an old schoolfellow, married and peacefully settled in the country, she writes on one occasion :—

“Do you remember that alley on the left, less frequented than the others? It was always towards it that we turned our steps; there, wholly given up to sentiment, we used to walk in peace, one of your arms on my shoulders, and one of mine round your waist. . . . Why do we not enjoy this pleasure in some other garden? Should we feel the worth of it less, and have we nothing to say to each other? Alas! . . . Adieu, write to me; it is my consolation. Adieu, dear Sophie.”

The writer of these lines was a woman of sensibility and pure feeling. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his *Emile* and the *New Héloïse*, only fanned into flame what was already a genuine heat, and the flame was, of the two, perhaps the least natural and serviceable to her. If she had lived in times of less abnormal excitement, she might have been a de Staël or a de la Fayette. As it is, she ranks as a grand and noble-minded woman, a trustworthy and spirited writer.

## § 2. THE ULTRA-REVOLUTIONISTS.

After the list of the literary victims of the Reign of Terror must come those who, votaries of letters also, were fatally impelled through political fanaticism to sacrifice



youthful and promising spirits like André Chénier, who had been given but spare time to produce the riper fruits of their genius. Foremost in the dark group stands the man who represented more completely than any of his associates of the Convention the forces, the austere and cruel features, the quality and the defects of the extraordinary period which brought him to light and fame; Robespierre the angel, says Louis Blanc, the youngest and most powerful historian of these memorable times; Robespierre the miscreant, writes Michelet, the most poetical but by no means the most impartial exponent of historical truth. It is not within our province to decide whether he was the one or the other; some unbiassed historian may eventually clear him of undeserved calumny and divest him of extravagant praise. Our task with him is far less complex; if he was a powerful and wily agitator of the masses, no doubt can be entertained as to his comparative inferiority as an author. Robespierre's literary fame could hardly have borne his name to posterity, and it is permitted to suppose that in a man intellectually so concentrated and speculative the literary faculty lost much by being made subservient to deep political designs. The little advocate of Arras, so soon destined to become a giant in the Convention, first obtained notoriety with the pen by harmless essays and innocent songs, the latter making up for badness, said one of his earlier friends, only by the pleasing quality of the poet's voice. Maximilien-Marie-Isidore de Robespierre, like his colleague and rival Danton, was a native of northern France; he was born at Arras in 1758. The future *revolutionnaire* laboured under unfavourable circumstances almost from his birth. He was bereft at a tender age of the loving care of a mother; and his father, a barrister of some distinction, having fled from France for reasons as yet not elucidated, young Maximilien was left in charge of his maternal grandfather. Curiously enough his education was

strongly tinged with clericalism ; he was protected by the clergy of Arras, and to their intervention he owed a gratuitous education at the Paris Lycée Louis-le-Grand. On leaving school Robespierre studied law, and shortly after being admitted to the bar he returned to his native town and exercised his profession with some degree of success. Simultaneously he courted letters and wrote some verses. Arras boasted of a drinking and singing society, much of the same character as the modern *Caciao*, still in existence in Paris, whereof Robespierre was a noted ornament. The members were recruited in the ranks of the *bourgeoisie* and even of the nobility ; magistrates did not disdain to leave gravity at the door and indulge in the lighter arts over the festive board ; officers avoided there the *ennui* of garrison life ; and history informs us that Carnot was one of Maximilien-Robespierre's gayest companions. The young advocate became a member of the local academy of *belles-lettres* ; as such he wrote several essays on social subjects, the most conspicuous of these being "On the origin of the opinion which extends to all the members of a family a part of the disgrace that attaches to a criminal," and a "Eulogy on Gresset," proposed by the Academy of Amiens. The latter production is written in the emphatic and obscure style which prevailed towards the close of the eighteenth century. Beyond this it calls for no particular remark. The former essay is worthier of consideration. It points to the bent of Robespierre's ideas, and it often attains eloquence. The author shows himself what he was ever afterwards in politics—a faithful disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a convinced follower of his democratic principles, a resolute antagonist of Voltairian ideas. Even the style of the essay is copied from Jean-Jacques, and in some respects the pupil is not unworthy of being compared to the master, although the imitation is too palpable not to incur immediate detection.

However small Robespierre's literary merits may seem to us now, his countrymen evidently entertained the highest opinion of his capacities, and made sanguine predictions as to his future fame. Doubtless they little imagined what the nature of that fame was to be. He was encouraged to pursue his progress in the career of letters by flattering encomiums from his friends of the Arras Academy, by some of whom he was entreated, in doubtful verse, "not to deprive his head of the immortal laurels glory was preparing for him." Robespierre resisted these touching entreaties, and there is every reason to infer that French literature lost nothing by his abstention from pure literature, an abstention which he maintained ever afterwards. Besides, his attention was directed elsewhere ; revolutionary passions were brewing ; the throne was beginning to totter ; and although nothing could yet help to foresee the blood-red days of the Terror, cool and judicious minds like Robespierre's were perfectly aware that a supreme crisis was at hand. When the States-General were called together, Robespierre, esteemed and well known in his province, was naturally designated as a fit person to present his countrymen's claims and complaints ; but it seemed as if the petty barrister, poet, and essayist must remain in the common throng amidst an Assembly which numbered orators like Mirabeau and Barnave, and at first nothing was heard of him. His physical advantages were far below his apparent mediocrity ; his face was thin and anything but prepossessing ; his voice was weak although agreeable, and his figure spare in proportion. Yet, when he addressed the States a month after their meeting, his few words produced a strange and almost prophetic effect. They had been uttered in a low voice, and in a tone far from trenchant ; yet his few phrases betrayed such resolution, such firmness of purpose, that a murmur ran through the Assembly, and all eyes were fixed upon the unknown speaker. Henceforth Robespierre

rose steadily in favour and renown, and his oratorical talent, hitherto verbose and diffuse, purified itself, so to speak, and became his chief weapon in the tragical battles that took place in the Convention, all of which he won save one. We cannot, without transgressing the limits of our subject, follow him in his extraordinary career, in the course of which he immolated friends and foes in pursuance of his designs; but before taking leave of him we will quote what appears to us one of the best and most favourable specimens of his oratory—a fragment of a speech delivered on the 7th of Thermidor (July 25th), 1794, three days before his death, in answer to a deputation from the club of the Jacobins. Robespierre said—

“The revolutions which up to our times have convulsed the face of empires have had for sole object a change of dynasty or the transfer of the power of one to the hands of several. The French Revolution is the first that has been founded on the rights of humanity and on the principles of justice. The other revolutions only needed ambition; ours demands virtue. Ignorance and strength have absorbed them in a new species of despotism; ours, which has originated in justice, can only live by it. . . . I know but two parties, that of good and that of bad citizens. Patriotism is not a party feeling, but a feeling of the heart. Patriotism does not consist in transient impetuosity that respects neither principles nor good sense nor morality; still less does it lie in devotion to the interests of a faction. Withered as my heart is by the experience of so many treasons, I believe in the necessity of calling in probity and all generous sentiments to the help of the Republic. I feel that wherever an honest man may be, we must hold out our hands to him and press him to our hearts.”

Would that all Robespierre's speeches had been as conciliating, and his acts inspired by such pure sentiments! Three days later he appeared on the guillotine, and died the death he had inflicted on so many others, at the age of thirty-six.



It was the fate of literary terrorists to acquire their first notoriety by the pen. Marat began by writing, like Robespierre; but he wrote a great deal more than his fellow-member of the Convention, and was known a great deal less, at least before the Revolution. Jean-Paul Marat, born in Switzerland in 1744, was neither a Swiss nor a Frenchman, but his birth-language was French. By descent he was a Spaniard;<sup>1</sup> his father, of noble blood, and whose real name was de Mara, emigrated to Sardinia; but having embraced the Protestant religion, he was compelled to seek refuge in Switzerland, where the too notorious Marat came into the world. Marat seems to have been singularly restless; he embraced several professions one after the other, was a novelist, a doctor, a philosopher; but he obviously retained a dominant taste for science; he wrote several works on electricity and light, as well as various political pamphlets, translated some books, travelled for some time, and was for a certain period French master in Edinburgh, where he published in 1774 a little book in English, *The Chains of Slavery*, which only appeared in French eighteen years later.<sup>2</sup> He was discharging the duties of doctor of the *gardes du corps* of the count of Artois when the throne fell. With rare sagacity—for this sanguinary philanthropist was remarkably gifted—he discovered the means of acquiring unparalleled popularity. Beside the horrible invitations to massacre which filled the pages of his newspaper, the *Ami du Peuple*, appeared pieces of logic and sound sense that were calculated to attract and move the masses. How far he succeeded is sufficiently well known. The hand of Charlotte Corday brought the publication of the *Ami du Peuple* to a close in 1793. Some of his first works, be it

<sup>1</sup> In his history of *The Origin of the Bonaparte Family*, Michelet gives interesting details on the physical resemblance said to have existed between Marat and Napoleon the First. The French historian, after minute research, is inclined to believe that the Marats, or Maras, were of the same stock as the Bonaparte family.

<sup>2</sup> Quérard, *La France littéraire*.

remarked, are worthy of serious notice; that on *Man* was criticised and extolled by Voltaire, and it is beyond doubt that the celebrated Cabanis employed some of the author's ideas without taking the trouble to quote him. Marat was superior to Hébert,<sup>1</sup> the editor of the newspaper, the *Père Duchesne*, who perished on the scaffold at the hands of Robespierre, and who had Marat's unbridled violence without a particle of his talent.

Saint-Just<sup>2</sup> and Danton<sup>3</sup> belonged to another class. Saint-Just studied assiduously in his youth, wrote doggerel verses after leaving school, and being in Paris in 1789 was suddenly fired by revolutionary faith. He was one of the revolutionaries who were most lavishly treated by nature. Tall, of an admirable figure and strikingly handsome, St. Just was barely five-and-twenty years of age when he became a member of the Convention. Two years after, he finished his life on the fatal guillotine, and in this short space he became one of the prime movers of the Revolution. Within that space, too, he published several political essays which—republished later—tended to show him in his real colours. His essay on the *Spirit of the Revolution* is good in its way. His speeches in the Convention, although imbued with the rather grandiloquent tone which pervade literature and oratory in the time of the Revolution—are eloquent and full of the most ardent patriotism. This young man was an orator and a patriot, and, in spite of his faults, is a representative figure of the Revolutionary era. So was Danton, who, through his magnificent eloquence, the sincerity of his opinion, and the greater kindness of his nature, can claim a place beside his younger rival.

<sup>1</sup> 1755-1794.<sup>2</sup> 1767-1794.

1759-1794.

## § 3. THE THEATRE DURING THE REVOLUTION.

A revolution without a theatre,<sup>1</sup> such as England saw in the seventeenth century, was not possible in the France of the eighteenth. Paris least of all the cities in the world could dispense with the sights, the satires, the intellectual stimulants, to which she had been accustomed. It is true that she lost her Court when she obtained her Legislative Assembly, and that, in the absence of court and nobility, one of the mainstays of the drama was gone. But the court was no longer the centre or the principal patron of intellect and literature in the capital. For more than a century and a half, as we have seen, there had been courts and canons of taste distinct from those which ruled at Versailles and Marly; and, from the time of Corneille, Molière, and Racine, the theatres could be filled without either royalty or nobility. Thus the Parisian stage was not greatly affected by the current of tempestuous politics which raged in the Assembly and in the streets; or, if it felt any effect at all, it was an advantageous one. The men of the Revolution clung to the theatre; the acts which were passing without found their reflection within; the drama of the world, now as ever, stimulated the drama of the sock and buskin.

The first few days of the popular outbreak furnished an illustration of the fact. After the Bastille had fallen, the manager of the *Théâtre-Français* conceived a notion of giving a representation on behalf of "MM. les Gardes françaises," who had fraternised with the mob in their attack upon that symbol of tyranny and injustice. This was on the 23d of July 1789; the pieces played were de Belloy's *Gaston and Bayard*, and Collé's *Hunting-party of Henry IV.*; and the

<sup>1</sup> In this and the following chapters on the theatre I have chiefly followed Muret, *Histoire de France par le théâtre*, 3 vols.

house was crammed. A week later the *Comédie Française* had a still greater, though a more unanticipated success. Turning over the pages of Destouches,<sup>1</sup> the actors Molé and Mademoiselle Contat came upon a play which had never been considered as one of the masterpieces of the author; and it appeared to them that *The Ambitious Man and the Indiscreet Woman*, though written seventy years ago, contained parts which could at that moment be played with special appropriateness. The leading rôles were those of a couple of ministers, the wife of one of them, and the king of Spain. Don Philippe, an able and upright statesman, is brought into contrast with the ambitious and unscrupulous Don Fernando; and, as good luck would have it, the audience perceived in the former an apt parallel with the virtuous Necker, the prudent economist who then held the reins of power. They had reason for the idea, whether the management had seen its success beforehand or not. Such passages as these applied very fairly to Necker:—

“Contented, and of good humour,  
Polite, amiable, without pride or haughtiness,  
Having no interest but that of the master,  
And ever busy without seeming so.”

When one asks if Don Philippe takes pleasure in his brilliant occupation, the answer is

“Twice he has sought to resign his power into the king’s hands;  
Not that he is dissatisfied but for the sake of a quiet life.  
Happily for us the prince is too wise  
To let so good a servant depart. . . .  
He accumulates, he contrives,  
But for whom? The king alone has the whole profit.  
He aims at enriching and relieving the state:  
As for himself, he lives without pomp, without display.”

<sup>1</sup> See bk. vi. ch. i. § i.



Louis XVI. also had his share in the applause :—

“ A prince full of kindness, of virtue, of courage,  
Discreet, wise, prudent, in the flower of his age,  
Captivating men’s minds by his victorious charms,  
And formed by heaven to rule over our hearts.”

Neither managers, authors, nor public would, however, have been long content with the old comedies ; and the Revolution was to have its dramatists. Marie-Joseph Chénier,<sup>1</sup> of whom we have already heard, had twice before courted success upon the stage, once in a comedy and once in a tragedy. Neither *Edgar, or the Supposed Page*, played in 1785, nor *Azemire*, brought out in the following year, had held its own before the public ; the lot of *Charles IX.*, first played on the 4th of November 1789, at the *Comédie Française*, was very different. It had been written in the previous year, but the march of events, and perhaps a little retouching here and there, made it even more appropriate to a Parisian audience now than it would have been if earlier put on the stage. As a dramatist Chénier is manifestly a disciple of Voltaire, and his literary spirit is the spirit of the age. Art had but the moiety of his devotion ; he was at the same time an advanced Liberal, an ardent politician, a philosopher of the new order of ideas. He was not content with dramatising, he would teach and preach ; and whilst his characters acted like real men and women, they should also convey the doctrines which had recommended themselves to Marie-Joseph Chénier. It was not a good standpoint for a dramatist ; but for Chénier, perhaps, it was the only possible one.

*Charles IX.* was but a transparent cloak for Louis XVI. ; de l’Hôpital was not more the chancellor whom we have encountered by the side of Catherine de Medici than he was the Necker of the Assembly ; Coligny was La Fayette ; and the

<sup>1</sup> 1764-1811.

struggles of the Catholics and the Huguenots melted before the heat of a revolutionary audience into the struggle between the privileged classes and the people. The king and the clergy both felt the weight of Chénier's arm; the young Republic no less surely felt the power of his championship. Who could mistake the present force of the advice given by de l'Hôpital to Charles?

"Sire, do not employ, I entreat of you,  
Retz and Guise and Tavannes, and all these courtiers,  
The hateful workers of the ills of France. . .  
Do not for ever suffer, at the pleasure of the courtiers,  
The supreme authority to pass from hand to hand;  
Believe your own soul only, and reign for yourself;  
And if you would have the love of your subjects,  
Be king of France, and not of your court."<sup>1</sup>

Or who could fail to measure the significance of such lines as that which speaks of the

"Vain rights of the nobility,  
Which in other days force extorted from weakness"<sup>2</sup>

Both the people and the adherents of the Court understood the allusions. One of the audience has himself told us how these innuendoes, or rather these palpable hits, were received. "It is impossible to exaggerate the effect of this work," says Arnault in his memoirs,<sup>3</sup> "which so greatly flat-

<sup>1</sup> "Sire, n'employez pas, c'est moi qui vous en prie,  
Retz et Guise et Tavannes, et tous ces courtisans,  
Des malheurs de la France ceslons artisans. . .  
Ne laissez point sans cesse, au gré des courtisans,  
Errer de main en main l'autorité suprême;  
Ne croyez que votre âme, et regnez par vous-même;  
Et si de vos sujets vous desirez l'amour,  
Soyez roi de la France, et non de votre cour."

<sup>2</sup> "Ces vains droits de noblesse  
Que la force autrefois conquit sur la faiblesse."

<sup>3</sup> *Souvenirs d'un Secrétaire*, vol. i. p. 196.

tered and wounded the two opinions between which the capital was divided. The enthusiasm which it excited in the friends of the Revolution can alone give the measure of the indignation which it excited amongst its enemies. The court was insulted by it."

*Charles IX.* was perhaps Chénier's greatest triumph; but it was not his best play. *Henry VIII.* is a historic drama superior in artistic force, and more in accordance with the highest recognised canons. In the fatuous and self-indulgent king, the author may have thought that he would once more catch the popular fancy of the time; but his opportunities were manifestly not so great for this spurious kind of success as they had been in his former subject. Still less so in the person of the queen "Anne de Boulen," whom, for the sake of the requisite contrast, he had to make spotlessly virtuous. *Tiberius* perhaps approaches nearest of all his tragedies to the level of Voltaire's best; whilst *Timoléon*, *Fénelon*, *Gracchus*, and *Calas*, unequal in merit, and valuable in something like the order in which I have placed them, contain passages of great beauty and of considerable dramatic force. The character of *Timoléon* has been looked upon as drawn from the author's own personal features, whilst Robespierre, or at all events the Terrorists, may be regarded as typified by *Timophane*. In one place the latter observes:

"It behoves a magistrate, wise, active, intrepid,  
Opposing to parties his invincible shield,  
To confound the fury of the factions;  
And liberty must reign through terror.

*Timol.* Let us remember that terror only makes slaves. . .  
Proud tyranny, greedy of murders,  
Veiling his livid face in a dreaded mask,  
Shamelessly usurping the name of liberty,  
Drives his bloody car through the heart of Corinth."

There is a distinction to be made between the brother of the

murdered André and the young fanatic who was one of the first of the Society of the Friends of the Constitution. It was in *Gracchus* that the lines occurred :

“Laws and not blood! Stain not your hands.  
Romans, would you dare to slaughter Romans?”

Whereupon a strident voice from the boxes, that of Albitte,<sup>1</sup> a Norman deputy, cried out, “Blood, and not laws!” More noticeable still is the milder side of Chénier’s character in his play of *Fénelon*; where one of his personages exclaims :

“God created mortals for mutual love, for union ;  
Cloisters and prisons are not of his work ;  
God made liberty, man has made slavery.”

The character of Charles IX. was created, in the technical stage sense, by a tragedian whose name is more associated with the Republican and Imperial eras than with any other. Talma<sup>2</sup> had made his *début* at the *Comédie Française* in the Seyd of Voltaire’s *Mahomet*, in the year 1787. A man of intelligence, study, and conscientious labour, he devoted himself to his art with an enthusiasm which was at that time unusual, but which was destined, in the persons of his contemporaries and immediate successors, to become a point of honour in the profession. It is related of him that, having to appear in the subordinate part of Proculus, in Voltaire’s *Brutus*, he came upon the stage carefully dressed in the true costume of a Roman republican, and that his audacity took away the breath of the spectators. “It is ridiculous,” cried Mademoiselle Contat; “he looks like an antique statue!” The praise was the more genuine for being unintended. Such faithful interpretations of the spirit of a play, in costume and accessories as well as in its expressions, did not long continue to be matter for criticism or surprise; albeit there were

<sup>1</sup> Died in the Russian campaign in 1812.

<sup>2</sup> 1763-1826



actors who grumbled that "one could not even have a side-pocket for one's snuff-box or latch-key, in a Roman toga." If Talma made *Charles IX.*, *Charles IX.* made Talma; for it was in this part that he definitely established himself with the public. Chénier and he, between them, made the fortunes of the *Comédie Française*, having an apt coadjutor in the young Madame Vestris,<sup>1</sup> the sister of Dugazon, the teacher of Talma. Talma soon became a popular favourite.

The following theatrical episode will give a very fair idea of the extremes to which party feelings were carried during the Revolution. One evening, in the summer of 1790, Mirabeau was at the theatre, when some indifferent piece was to have been played, and he took it into his head to call for *Charles IX.* Some one came forward and said that the management would have been pleased to accede to the request, but that Madame Vestris (who played Catherine) was indisposed, and another actor, Saint-Prix, absent on sick leave. The audience backed Mirabeau, and on a sudden Talma made his appearance from the side scenes, and said that the indisposition of Madame Vestris was not so serious as to stand in the way of her zeal, and that Saint-Prix's part could be read by a volunteer. This brought down the house, and the play was acted; much to the chagrin of the royalist element in the *Comédie Française*, as well as of the audience itself. The latter became expressive and unruly, and the guardians of public order had to intervene. Talma suffered for his boldness on this occasion, being expelled from the company. A few nights after the tragedy, *Spartacus* was announced. All play-going Paris was there, for they had heard of Talma's disgrace; and when Larive came forward to assume the leading part, the audience rose up and called for "Talma! Talma!" The tumult was only checked by the announcement that, on the following evening, the management would explain the course which it had

<sup>1</sup> 1743-1809.

taken. Next night the theatre was crammed once more. The *Barber of Seville* and *The School for Husbands* were down for representation, and the first of the two was listened to with impatience. Then Fleury,<sup>1</sup> the same who had proposed Talma's exclusion, came forward and said: "Gentlemen, our society, persuaded that M. Talma has betrayed its interests, and compromised the public peace, has unanimously resolved that it will have no further connection with him, until the authorities have decided upon it." Hereupon the two parties broke out into a worse uproar than on the previous night. Molière's comedy could not obtain a hearing, the stage was taken by storm, the disturbance was continued into the streets, and only ended when both sides were too tired to shout any more. On the next day the company was summoned to the Hôtel de Ville, and the mayor, the unfortunate Bailly, read them a lecture on obstinacy. They answered him warmly, and appealed to the town council, by whom they were enjoined to receive Talma back again, and to act with him. Still they resisted; more disturbances ensued, until at last the theatre was closed by the authorities. Then the pocket intervened and settled the whole dispute. The company yielded, Charles IX. and Talma reappeared, the favourite actor received an ovation, and the management was doubtless consoled by the magnitude of its receipts.

It was in 1790 that the Théâtre Français produced the *Awakening of Epimenides*, a one-act comedy, which was described by its author, Carbon de Flins,<sup>2</sup> as the first play founded on the Revolution. It was a clever *pièce de circonstance*, which contains many amusing passages. Epimenides, who had been living since the beginning of the world, had fallen asleep in the *ancien régime*, and wakes up in 1789. Utterly bewildered by what he sees, he commits himself to the guidance of a young gentleman M. d'Harcourt (Talma),

<sup>1</sup> 1751-1822.<sup>2</sup> 1757-1806.

and the honest citizen Ariste, who take him about and explain all that has happened. Louis XVI., they tell him

“The idol of France,  
Has come to live amongst us ;  
After a few moments of trouble and license,  
His august and amiable presence  
Brings happiness to his quieted people ;  
He no longer surrounds himself with a foreign guard ;  
What can a good father fear in the midst of his people ?  
The closer one sees him, the more he is loved.”

After the compliments come the satires. In the garden of the Tuileries the French Rip Van Winkle and his officious guides come upon many strange characters. One of them, Monsieur Fatras, *Anylice* Mr. Rubbish, an ex-advocate-general, complains grievously of the judicial changes that have taken place.

“To talk first of justice,  
For that is the subject I am familiar with,  
I have had forty years of reports and fees ;  
My briefs have made me bend a hundred times under  
their weight,  
And I have worn out six gowns upon my back ;  
But criminal justice  
Had ever its special attractions for me ;  
That, sir, was what I excelled in !  
And they wish me to adopt a new form  
For my judgments now-a-days.  
They have no respect for our old decrees ;  
They have abolished everything, everything, even torture ;  
In the new procedure,  
Before punishing, they prove the offence ;  
And until the crime is clearly made known,  
Judgment is suspended.  
Ah, if they are all to be believed,  
None of them will be hanged.

*Epim.* But that seems to me very right.

*Fat.* That's what they all tell me.”

Of laughable plot, or even of broad farcical humour, the *Awakening of Epimenides* has but a slender supply. Its interest was not intended to be more than ephemeral; but in 1790 every allusion to the striking events of the outer world was seized on with avidity, and magnified into brilliant wit.

Marie-Joseph Chénier was not the only dramatist whose characters were interpreted and created by Talma. Both Ducis<sup>1</sup> and Fabre d'Eglantine<sup>2</sup> wrote for him; and the Palais-Royal, a new theatre on a grand scale opened in the Rue Richelieu in the spring of 1790, produced within the space of a month a new five-act drama in verse from each of these authors; the *Plot by Letter* by Fabre d'Eglantine, *John Lackland* by Ducis, and *Colas* by Chénier. Fabre's comedy was successful; and indeed it was one of his best. His other plays were *Molière's Philinte*; *The Heir, or Town and Country*. His style is rugged and unequal in merit; his verse limps, and the elevation of his ideas is not sufficient to carry one smoothly over the ground.

Ducis had accepted the vocation of naturalising the plays of Shakspeare in France; and all that he could need in an actor was ready for him in the person of Talma. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* had already appeared in French dress, and had made little impression; but, as soon as Talma assumed the character rôles, they succeeded. *John Lackland* was less fortunate; but in the following year *Othello* took the public by storm. On the first night one of the audience cried out: "It is a Moor who did that, and not a Frenchman!"<sup>3</sup> It seems odd that an actor of Talma's powers

<sup>1</sup> 1733-1816.

<sup>2</sup> Fabre (1755-1794)—for the cognomen was assumed—was a member of the Convention, by whom he was appointed, in conjunction with Romme, to draw up the new calendar; a work which they effected with much success. The propriety of the names which they substituted for the old Roman appellations of the months is such as to make one almost regret their discontinuance.

<sup>3</sup> We shall meet Ducis again at a later stage of his career.



should have undertaken to play the young lover in the *Plot by Letter* within a fortnight of his interpretation of King John.

The year 1793 is memorable in the annals of the stage by the production of a play which created as much disturbance amongst the public as Chénier's *Charles IX*. *The Friend of Law* was an addition made by Laya<sup>1</sup> to the repertory of the *Comédie-Française*, which, after the secession of Talma, had changed its name to *Théâtre de la Nation*, and had shown itself more than ever opposed to the ideas of the prominent popular leaders. *The Friend of Law* cannot be called a first-rate play, but it is written with much spirit, and with the vigour which usually attends a happy *pièce de circonstance*. It was first acted on the 2d of January, just before the king was put upon his trial. Robespierre and Marat appeared on the stage under the names of Nomophage and Duricrâne, and the excesses of the terrorists were lashed without mercy. The audience, composed for the most part of men whose views harmonised with those of the management and of the author, seized eagerly upon the principal points, and the play was a great success. Judge with what reason.

“Patriots! Why, who? These intrepid cowards,  
 Preaching homicide from their secret chamber,  
 Solons of yesterday, reforming children,  
 Shaping their destructive dreams to laws . . .  
 These prudent enemies are in our midst.  
 They're all jugglers, patriots for an office,  
 Hiding their grins beneath a civic pomp,  
 Preaching equality, full of ambition,  
 False worshippers, whose piety  
 Is but an outer shell, hypocrisy;  
 These good free-thinkers, these apostate souls  
 Who to degrade the fairest gifts of heaven

<sup>1</sup> 1761-1833.

Make liberty as bloody as themselves !  
 But no ; for liberty, in them despised,  
 Has its eternal throne within our hearts.  
 May all these mountebanks, these popular thieves,  
 These shameless trumpeters of patriotism,  
 Rid of their presence this enfranchised earth.  
 War ! war on those who foster anarchy !  
 Tyrant royalists, tyrant republicans,  
 Yield to the laws ! they are your sovereigns.  
 Blush to have been ; blush that you still exist,  
 Robbers, the night has passed ; prepare to die !"

Of course the Commune,<sup>1</sup> the Convention,<sup>2</sup> the Jacobins,<sup>3</sup> were enraged by the audacity of the attack. On the 12th of January, when the fifth representation was announced, a decree of the Commune, forbidding the play to be represented, was everywhere stuck up in Paris. But a crowded audience assembled ; the actors read the decree of the Commune, and a fearful uproar took place. General Santerre, an ex-brewer, made his appearance upon the stage, but he was hissed, and cries of "Down with the frothy general !" were raised everywhere. Chambon, the mayor of Paris, made vain endeavours to be heard. It was resolved to send immediately a letter to the Convention and demand the representation of the play. Laya wrote also an indignant letter to the Convention, which was sitting in permanence in deliberation upon the trial of the king. There was a good deal of jealousy between

<sup>1</sup> The Commune was the name given to the municipal council of Paris during the Revolution.

<sup>2</sup> The Convention, or National Convention, was the third of the representative assemblies, elected since 1789. It began its sittings on the 22d of September 1792, at the close of the Legislative Assembly, and continued until the 26th of October 1795, when the Directory began. During that time it published 8370 decrees.

<sup>3</sup> The Jacobin Club—first called Club Breton—consisted of deputies and men of letters, and was first constitutional, but became afterwards ultra-republican, and supported the Mountain. It was opened in October 1789 and closed November 11, 1794.

the Convention and the Commune : and the former, not unwilling to take a view opposed to its rival, sent word that the piece might be played. The *Friend of Law* was acted at nine o'clock that same evening before two thousand spectators, whilst thirty thousand citizens were keeping guard round the theatre, in spite of the troops and two pieces of artillery stationed in the neighbourhood, and it was one o'clock striking before the piece was concluded. The Commune thereupon published a decree ordering all theatres to be shut, but the executive council of the Convention quashed this decree, at the same time enjoining the theatres not to play any piece which might cause trouble. For the next night Vigée's *Matinée d'une jolie Femme* had been announced ; but the audience had come to hear the *Friend of Law*, and the management were obliged to compromise matters by promising it for the night following. On the 14th of January the *Comédie-Française* announced for representation Molière's *Miser* and *The Physician in spite of himself*. Troops and cannon were gathered outside, Santerre was again hosted, and the actors refused to perform the play ; whereupon a number of young men jumped upon the stage, and read the drama from beginning to end. It was not, however, again represented until after the fall of Robespierre.

The letter addressed by Laya to the Convention is full of vigour and nervous protestation, and appeals very cleverly to the self-esteem of the demagogues. " Citizen legislators ! " he begins, " a great abuse of authority has just been perpetrated against a citizen, whose crime is that of asserting the laws, order, and good morals ; the decision of your committee, to which you have referred the examination of a work entitled *The Friend of Law*, has been anticipated. In this work I have supported the eternal principles of reason ; it was an identification of myself with you, and you have been calumniated in the disciple who was but repeating your lessons. . .

How will this Commune (and I denounce the act) justify the order which it has just conveyed to the comedians, at the moment when I was coming to present myself before you? This order declares that the comedians have to submit to it, every week, the pieces to be played during that week, so that it may censure, prohibit, or sanction the plays according to its pleasure! Thus the old police has just been resuscitated under the municipal scarf. How will this Commune justify itself for daring to regard and order about the comedians like servants; for having sent for them, four days ago, to rate them for proposing to play the *Cid*, whilst it tolerates in other theatres<sup>1</sup> the *Cid* and the *Chinese Orphan*? Has it then forgotten that the despots of Versailles used every day to see *Brutus*, the *Death of Cæsar*,<sup>2</sup> *William Tell*, etc.?" By the 3d of August in the same year the authorities had made up their mind, to the promulgation of a decree which defined more clearly the limits of the privilege which it was thought wise to grant to the drama. This decree is as follows: "From the fourth of this month, and until the first of September following, there shall be represented three times a week in such theatres in Paris as shall be appointed by the municipality, the tragedies of *Brutus*, *William Tell*, *Caius Gracchus*, and other dramatic pieces which record the glorious events of the Revolution, and the virtues of the defenders of liberty. One of these representations shall be given each week at the expense of the republic. Every theatre at which may be represented pieces tending to deprave the public mind, and to revive the disgraceful superstition of royalty, shall be closed, and the managers arrested and punished according to the rigour of the law. The municipality of Paris is charged with the execution of the present decree."

<sup>1</sup> The *Théâtre de la République* seems to have been favoured on account of its name, and the political complexion of its management. As the *Cid* contains the idea of a king, this was perhaps a reason for its being objected to.

<sup>2</sup> Two tragedies by Voltaire.



On the 2d of January 1794, the convention apportioned a sum of a hundred thousand *livres* for these representations.

Laya had written before 1793 *The New Narcissus*, his first comedy ; *Jean Calas*, a tragedy ; and the *Dangers of Opinion*, wherein he attacks the prejudice of a family sharing in the dishonour of a guilty father. He wrote also several plays after his *Friend of Law*, but in none did he succeed in equalling the extraordinary success of that comedy. Though a native of Paris, he was of Spanish extraction, was elected to the Academy in 1817, and died sixteen years later.

The company of the *Théâtre de la Nation*, which seems still to have occasionally gone by its old name *Théâtre Français*, were not fortunate. Early in September 1793, owing to a new cause of complaint against them, in respect of Neufchâteau's dramatisation of Richardson's *Joseph Andrews*, under the title of *Pamela*, they were arrested and thrown into prison. One of the inferior actors, having been released, begged indulgence for his comrades. Collot d'Herbois, formerly an unsuccessful actor at Lyons, who had been hissed from the provincial stage, and who was now high in office, replied, "The head of the *Comédie Française* shall be guillotined, and the rest transported." He was as good as his word. Fleury, Dazincourt, Larive, Mesdemoiselles Louise and Emilie Contat, Raucourt and Lange, after being in prison for the greater part of a year, were condemned to death, and were only rescued by a clerk of the Committee of Public Safety, Labussière, who intercepted the fatal decree between the hands of Collot d'Herbois,<sup>1</sup> and Fouquier Tinville.<sup>2</sup>

It would carry us too far out of our line to enter at length into an examination of all the plays which were put upon the stage during the revolutionary epoch ; nor would it repay us to give more than a passing notice to such pieces as the *Pinto* and *Plautus* of Lemer cier,<sup>3</sup> the *Marius at Minturni* of

<sup>1</sup> 1750-1796.

<sup>2</sup> 1747-1795.

<sup>3</sup> 1771-1840.

Arnault,<sup>1</sup> the *Death of Abel* by Legouvé,<sup>2</sup> the *Old Bachelor* by Collin d'Harleville,<sup>3</sup> and many more. Enough has been said to show how large a part was played by the stage during the most stormy period of the Revolution, and how keenly the authorities appreciated the influence wielded by the theatres upon the people. This is still further exemplified in a decree passed by the Directory on the 4th of January 1796, whereby the proprietors and managers of theatres "are enjoined, upon their individual responsibility, to cause to be played each day by their orchestra, before the rising of the curtain, the airs loved by republicans, such as the *Marseillaise*, *Ça ira*, *Veillons au Salut de l'Empire*, and the *Chant du Départ*. In the interval between the two pieces the hymn of the Marseillais, or some other patriotic song, shall always be sung. The Theatre of Arts shall give, upon every day when a representation takes place, the *Offering to Liberty*, with its choruses and accompaniments, or some other republican piece. It is expressly forbidden to sing, to permit or cause to be sung, the homicidal air called the *Réveil du Peuple*."

The Republic had fairly taken the stage under its protecting wing; with what result the future history of the French drama will show.

#### § 4. THE END OF THE REIGN OF TERROR.

The Terror would have yielded much sooner before the outraged conscience of the nation, whom the excesses of its false friends had driven first to despair and then to the verge of a formidable reaction, if it had not been for the valour of the armies of France against her enemies. The foreign wars not only reconciled the country to patience in regard to her

<sup>1</sup> 1766-1834.

<sup>2</sup> 1764-1812.

<sup>3</sup> 1755-1806.

internal troubles, but they provided an outlet for the national force and energy which might otherwise have been turned against the fomenters of disorder in the capital ; and thus it happened that the liberty of Frenchmen was trodden under foot with impunity. The Convention, however, was able from the year 1794 and onwards to pass some really wise and beneficial measures, and to maintain the honour of French arms in the face of Europe. The struggle in the capital between the adherents of the old Mountain party, and the Girondists who represented the comparatively moderate middle-class party, was not long ; and on the final triumph of the latter, their superior capacity and energy were at once displayed. The Committee of Public Safety, to whom the conduct of the foreign wars had been entrusted, received a notable accession of power in the person of Carnot,<sup>1</sup> minister of war, under whose direction the old system of employing small forces against isolated points was exchanged for *la grande guerre*, in which the armies of the Republic were for the first time massed together and employed with greater solidity and effect. It was now that such generals as Hoche,<sup>2</sup> Pichegru,<sup>3</sup> Westermann,<sup>4</sup> and Kléber,<sup>5</sup> began to display those military talents which forecast the genius of Napoleon, and gave birth to the aggressive spirit of the Republic. Meanwhile the Reign of Terror was fairly at an end ; and if, in many instances, both in Paris and in the provinces, the champions of the old sanguinary *régime* were treated with a violence which was in itself a new and vengeful reign of terror, still the reaction was on the whole peaceful and moderate. The National Convention remained for a long time neutral, and strong in its neutrality, between the staunch republicanism of the lower and middle classes and the reactionists who favoured monarchical ideas. La Harpe, Poncelet, Richer de Sérizy, Tronçon, Marchéna, and other journalists, declared, as a rule,

<sup>1</sup> 1753-1823.    <sup>2</sup> 1768-1797.    <sup>3</sup> 1761-1804.    <sup>4</sup> Died 1794.    <sup>5</sup> 1753-1800.

for the latter party. The *jeunesse dorée*,<sup>1</sup> who had been amongst the steadiest supporters of the Convention, passed over, for the most part, to the reaction, and the democrats found themselves more and more in a minority. Nevertheless the Government was placed beyond serious attack by its victorious army. The abortive enterprise of the *émigrés* at Quiberon, where they were destroyed by Hoche, definitely paralysed the hopes of the exiled nobility; and at home the constitution voted by the Convention on the 22d of August 1795, the result of six years of deliberation and experience, was a genuine triumph for the moderate republican party.

This new constitution, which superseded the partial one of 1791, was wise and well conceived. The legislative power was entrusted to two chambers or councils, both representative: the Council of Five Hundred, which had the sole initiation and discussion of new laws; and the Ancients or Senate, consisting of two hundred and fifty members. The Senate received the proposals of the lower chamber and read them three times, at intervals of not less than five days, except in case of "urgency," by voting which it might dispense with the delay. It could follow one of three courses with respect to the legislative measures proceeding from the Five Hundred; that is, it could adopt them, or, if it considered them incompatible with existing laws, it could vote this formula, "*La Constitution annule.*" The age of the Five Hundred was fixed at thirty, of the Ancients at forty, and both Councils were to be renewed by halves every two years. The executive power was entrusted to a Directory of five members, selected

<sup>1</sup> In 1795, Fréron, editor of the *Orateur du Peuple*, called the young men of Paris "to arms" in support of the Convention as opposed to the Mountain. Those who responded to his appeal belonged to the rich noble class, and became known under the nickname of the *jeunesse dorée*. They wore large coats, with deep collars folding down, of grey cloth, lined with black or green; hair long and loose, *à la cédille*, tied behind with *caucettes*; and they carried short sticks, pointed at one end and loaded with lead at the other.



from a list presented by the Lower and adopted by the Upper Chamber. The Directory was provided with a guard, was lodged in the Luxembourg, and had its civil list.<sup>1</sup> If any constitution could have definitely founded the Republic at this period, it would have been that of which I have quoted a few of the most characteristic provisions. But the reaction in favour of a monarchy in some form or other was too strong to be resisted. It gained force day by day, and even if no successful soldier had been found to occupy the vacant throne, the Republic would none the less have experienced the fate due to every institution which is born before its time.

Amongst the best and wisest measures of the Convention during the later phases of its existence were the establishment of the first Normal School and the foundation of the Institute. The idea of the presiding spirits of the Republic in the course which they thus pursued was similar to that which sought to produce conformity in the national drama, and which would have moulded the general education of the state upon a harmonious and systematic plan. The Normal School was not destined to a long existence ; but it lived long enough to set out upon the path which had been defined for it ; and it was to be reproduced under more hopeful auspices at a future time. The list of professors chosen to occupy the chairs thus provided by the State was not, thanks to the Reign of Terror, a specially remarkable one. Lavoisier, the greatest French chemist of the age, had been guillotined ; Berthollet supplied his place. Condorcet had died by his own hand rather than wait for the decree of the tyrants ; Volney therefore filled the chair of history which Condorcet would have so much adorned.

<sup>1</sup> See Mignet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, ch. xi. The Directory (la Réveillère-Lepaux, Rewbell, Letourneur, Barras, and Carnot, elected in the place of Siéyès, who declined to serve), endured from October 27, 1795, to August 3, 1797, when it was displaced by a *coup d'état*.

## § 5. LITERARY MEN OF THE DAY.

Constantin-François Chasseboeuf, count de Volney,<sup>1</sup> was born at Craon, near Mayenne. At the age of twenty five he made a voyage eastward, in Asia Minor and on the Nile, and wrote on his return a readable account of his experiences—a *Voyage in Egypt and Syria*; perhaps the best written of his works, if not the best, because he contrives to make his subject more prominent than himself, and skilfully sinks the traveller in the traveller's narrative. A close observer and a good describer, he may be said to have opened up the East to Europe; and in fact he is credited with having first pointed out to Napoleon Bonaparte the great advantages of the plain of the Pyramids as a theatre of war. In 1789 he was elected member of the States-General, and distinguished himself amongst the supporters of Mirabeau in the National Assembly. Early in 1792 he published his *Ruins; or, Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires*, which met with a great success, and earned him the fame of a philosopher, over and above that of a careful narrator. In this work he discourses upon the revolutions of empires, mingling his meditations upon the causes and circumstances of national decline with sketches, more or less graphic and picturesque, of the material ruins which illustrate the ruin of dynasties and of ideas. The description of Palmyra is perhaps the finest passage in the whole book, which is for the most part stiff, and heavy with too much preconceived deduction. The ruins of cities and empires are in fact only a thread upon which he laboriously strings his constantly-recurring negations of almost every accepted truth. Volney is not merely a sceptic, but a point-blank traverser of religious truth under all its many forms.

<sup>1</sup> 1757-1820.

Human creeds are, with him, universally founded in imposture ; it is not enough to say that they are false, but they were falsely imposed. The effect of his meditations and arguments is depressing in the extreme ; it would be the more depressing the more they were true. Under the Empire Volney became a senator and a count ; and in 1814 he gave to the world his last work, *New Researches in Ancient History*.

Let us look at one corner of the canvas on which Volney has drawn the picture of Palmyra, and then read the thoughts which were inspired by it :—

“The sun had just gone down ; a red line still marked his track in the distant horizon of the Syrian hills ; the full moon was rising in the East against a bluish background, upon the flat banks of the Euphrates. The sky was clear, the air calm and serene ; the dying light of day qualified the horror of the darkness, the first freshness of the night soothed the heat of the scorched land ; the shepherds had taken their camels under shelter ; the eye could perceive no motion on the gray monotonous plains ; a vast silence reigned over the desert ; only, at long intervals could be heard the dismal cries of a few night-birds and of a few jackals. The shades increased, and now in the twilight my gaze distinguished no more than the white phantoms of the columns and of the walls. These solitary places, this peaceful evening, this majestic scene, impressed upon my spirit a religious meditation. The aspect of a great desert city, the memory of the past, the comparison of the present, all raised my heart to lofty thoughts. I sat upon the trunk of a column, and there, my elbow resting on my knee, my head supported by my hand, now casting my looks upon the desert, now fixing them on the ruins, I abandoned myself to a profound reverie.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Le soleil venait de se coucher ; un bandeau rougeâtre marquait encore sa trace à l’horizon lointain des monts de la Syrie : la pleine lune à l’Orient s’élevait sur un fond bleuâtre, aux planes rives de l’Euphrate : le ciel était pur, l’air calme et serein ; l’éclat mourant du jour tempérerait l’horreur des ténèbres, la fraîcheur naissante de la nuit calmait les feux de la terre embrasée ;

Of what sort were the meditations which a scene like this induced in the mind of Volney, to whom Nature was the true God? He says :

‘ It is wrong to attribute your evils to God ! Tell me, perverse and hypocritical race, if these places are desolate, if powerful cities have been reduced to a solitude, is God the cause of the ruin ? Is it His hand which has overthrown these walls, sapped the foundations of these temples, shattered these columns ? Or is it the hand of man ? Is it the arm of God which has brought the wind upon the town and fire upon the country ; which has slain the people, burned the crops, torn up the trees, and laid waste the cultivated lands ? Or is it the arm of man ? And when after the destruction of harvests famine came, is it the vengeance of God which produced it, or the unreasoning fury of man ? When in the famine the people has fed upon unclean food, if pestilence followed, is it the wrath of God which sent it, or the imprudence of man ? When war, famine, and pestilence have mown down the inhabitants, if the land has been left desert, is it God who has depopulated it ? Is it His greed which robs the labourer, lays waste the productive fields, and devastates the country, or the greed of those who govern ? Is it His pride which gives rise to homicidal wars, or the pride of kings and their ministers ? Is it the venality of His decisions which overthrows the fortune of families, or the venality of the administrators of the laws ? Is it, in short, His passions which, under a thousand forms, inflict grief on individuals and peoples, or is it the passions of men ? And if, in the anguish of their afflictions, they see no remedy, is

les pâtes avaient retiré leurs chameaux ; l’œil n’apercevait plus aucun mouvement sur la prairie monotone et grisâtre ; un vaste silence régnait sur le désert ; seulement, à de longs intervalles, on entendait les légères cris de quelques oiseaux de nuit et de quelques chacals. L’ombre crépusculaire, et déjà dans le crépuscule mes regards ne distinguaient plus que les contours blanchâtres des colonnes et des murs. Ces lieux solitaires, cette scène poétique, cette scène majestueuse, imprimèrent à mon esprit un renouvellement religieux. L’aspect d’une grande cité déserte, la mémoire des temps passés, la comparaison de l’état présent, tout éleva mon cœur à de hautes pensées. Je me baïs sur le tronc d’une colonne, et, là, le coude appuyé sur le genou, la tête soutenue par la main, tantôt portant mes regards sur le désert, tantôt les fixant sur les ruines, je m’abandonnai à une rêverie profonde. <sup>1)</sup> — *Les Ruines*, bk. 1.



it the ignorance of God that they most blame, or their own ignorance?"<sup>1</sup>

The chair of philosophy in the Normal School was filled by Garat,<sup>2</sup> a man who had taken no inconsiderable part in the revolution, without committing himself to any act of overt violence, but who was nevertheless expelled both from the Senate and the Academy after the restoration. He wrote a volume of *Memoirs of the Revolution, or an Explanation of my Conduct in the Public Service*. This was published in 1794, and its tone may be divined from a single passage, in which he recommended that those who were worsted in the battle of politics should be expelled from the state. If his advice had been followed, doubtless much bloodshed would have been avoided; but he does not seem to have been one of those whose counsels are wont to prevail amongst their fellows. After his expulsion he made up for the apparent idleness of his life under the Empire, and was delivered of a *Memoir of M. Suard*, into which he introduced more of his

<sup>1</sup> "C'est à tort, que vous reportez à Dieu la cause de vos maux ! Dites, race perverse et hypocrite, si ces lieux sont désolés, si des cités puissantes sont réduites en solitude, est-ce Dieu qui a causé la ruine ? Est-ce sa main qui a renversé ces murailles, sapé ces temples, mutilé ces colonnes ? ou est-ce la main de l'homme ? Est-ce le bras de Dieu qui a porté le fer dans la ville et le feu dans la campagne ; qui a tué le peuple, incendié les moissons, arraché les arbres et ravagé les cultures ? ou est-ce le bras de l'homme ? et lorsqu' après la dévastation des récoltes, la famine est survenue, est-ce la vengeance de Dieu qui l'a produite, ou la fureur insensée de l'homme ? Lorsque dans la famine le peuple s'est repu d'aliments immondes, si la peste a suivi, est-ce la colère de Dieu qui l'a envoyée, ou l'imprudence de l'homme ? Lorsque la guerre, la famine et la peste ont moissonné les habitants, si la terre est restée déserte, est-ce Dieu qui l'a dépeuplée ? Est-ce son avidité qui pille le laboureur, ravage les champs producteurs et dévaste les campagnes, ou l'avidité de ceux qui gouvernent ? Est-ce son orgueil qui suscite des guerres homicides, ou l'orgueil des rois et de leurs ministres ? Est-ce la vénalité de ses décisions qui renverse la fortune des familles, ou la vénalité des organes des lois ? Sont-ce enfis ses passions qui, sous mille formes, tourmentent les individus et les peuples, ou sont-ce les passions des hommes ? Et, si dans l'angoisse de leurs maux, ils n'en voient pas les remèdes, est-ce l'ignorance de Dieu qu'il faut inculper, ou leur ignorance ?"

<sup>2</sup> 1749-1833.

recollections and more of his ingenious ideas ; but the interest of his books was merely ephemeral.

Necker,<sup>1</sup> whose name has already been mentioned as that of an able and conscientious minister of Louis XVI., was one of those statesmen and men of letters who were capable of rendering their country good service, at all events in time of peace, but who at an early period lost confidence in the power of the National Assembly to guide the fortunes of France and to control the passions of the multitude. He seems to have earnestly desired the welfare of his adopted country ;<sup>2</sup> he endeavoured to save and to reform the old constitution, with the genuine instincts of a conservative mind. But he did not grasp the situation as early as a statesman of his experience might have done ; and nothing was more natural than that he should fall between the two stools of the popularity which he courted and of the king whom he unconsciously assisted to blind. The people abandoned him, the king dispensed with his services, and still he did not hasten to leave France, to which he always remained faithful in his affections. His *History of the Revolution*, published in 1796 at Geneva, bears witness on almost every page to the attachment which he felt towards the country which he had endeavoured to govern ; although it is true that he had no special good will to the Assembly which had rejected his advice, nor to the nobility which had at first obstinately refused to make concessions of their privileges, and then, when it was too late, had given up more than they had been asked for. Of the courtiers under the old *régime* he says :—

“ The lavish gifts of governments, always uncertain in their nature, induce those who covet them to set a price upon their hopes ; presently they reckon them amongst their revenues ; they then borrow without being sure of repaying ; and this conduct, which degrades them, necessarily depreciates the respect which

<sup>1</sup> 1732-1804.

<sup>2</sup> He was a native of Geneva.

they are anxious to retain. In general the taste for intrigue and the decay of manners must be a natural consequence of the new kind of life to which the nobility of France had devoted itself. The favours of a court are a tribute to skill and to the talent of pleasing, and this education of the mind is nearly always incompatible with dignity of character. The nobility, moulded by an unceasing ambition, probably began to sink in estimation on the day when, being obliged to attach a great importance to forms, it made what was superficial a serious thing, and of manners a special science."

Necker wrote, it will be perceived, with great perspicacity, and was endowed with the finest kind of irony. Add the gift of irony to a self-complacent appetite for admiration, which was one of Necker's chief personal characteristics, and you will obtain a character in which the supercilious spirit will be largely developed. When Necker speaks of the conduct of his rivals and successors in the arena of statesmanship, he is apt to dismiss too lightly the ideas and the actions of his contemporaries. At times, again, he rises to real fervour and satirical force; as, for instance, in the following passage *à propos* of the decree of the Convention affirming the existence of God and the immortality of the soul:—

"O the folly of human pride! This people is very great in comparison with the world; but France, with her eighty-four departments, and eighty-five if we count Corsica; France and the other countries of Europe; France and the entire globe, on which we are constrained to roll around the sun; in brief, the earth, and the millions and the thousand millions of planets which people the vault of heaven, are but atoms or grains of dust in the sight of the unknown Author of so many wonders. Ah, that all presidents of national conventions, present or future, would recognise kings, grand dukes, and republics, and would moreover give, if they please, and the others were willing, the fraternal kiss to all the envoys of Europe, but that they would abstain from speaking, or speak upon their knees, of the Supreme Being!"

Necker was not alone in his advocacy of, and his efforts to bring about, a reformation of the French constitution. His friend Monnier,<sup>1</sup> the best orator of the States-General, was also a champion of moderation, and showed great courage during his political career. When he was returned to the National Assembly, of which he became president, he was sanguine enough to hope that he would be listened to there with the same attention as he had commanded in the provinces. "Doubtless," he said at a later period of his life, "I, like so many other friends of humanity, made the mistake of forming too many hopes; but how necessarily my condition contributed to my false security! All that had passed in my province, for nearly a year before the opening of the States-General, was calculated to nourish me in illusions and to conceal obstacles. When I reflect on all that we had obtained in Dauphiné, by the sole power of justice and reason, I perceive how I was led to think that Frenchmen deserved to be free. The lowest orders of the people calmly awaited the result of our labours. The multitude never broke in upon our assemblies. The spectators always restrained themselves within the bounds of propriety, and the votes were perfectly free. The clergy and the nobility showed themselves generous, the members of the communes moderate." It is a confession of radical weakness in Monnier's mind to have imagined that France as a whole, or that Paris in particular, was shaped after the fashion of peaceable Dauphiné; but if his candour condemns him as a statesman, it reflects credit upon him as a man. The scheme which he propounded for the salvation of the country involved a strong and inviolable royalty, "responsible ministers chosen by the king"—wherein apparently he saw nothing in the shape of a fallacy—a double legislature, one Chamber composed of an open and accessible aristocracy, not subject to removal. His model seems to have

<sup>1</sup> 1758-1806.



been sought in England ; and if it had been proposed and adopted in 1760, it might—I venture no farther—have staved off the revolution. In 1790 he was not listened to, and, like Necker, he deemed it prudent to seek an asylum abroad. He published at Geneva his best work, *Researches into the Causes which have prevented the French from becoming Free*, formed, during his exile, an establishment at Weimar for the education of the young, and only returned to France in 1801. It has been well said of him, that “he was thirsting after justice.” So also was Mallet du Pan,<sup>1</sup> a Calvinist born in Geneva, and a genuine lover of liberty without excess. All the men of this order of thought were wise, enlightened, and fit to govern in a free country, but they all failed through conceiving that a constitution could be decreed and imposed by the Assembly without so much as a shock to the progress of the nation. They were skilful publicists in the best sense, and they erred simply in misreading the signs of the times. Mallet du Pan was not a bigot ; he distinctly refused to unite in any measure of persecution against the French Roman Catholics ; but the influence which he gained from the respect of his contemporaries he lost again by the stiffness of his mental attitude. Republican by birth, he aimed at finding the middle way of the crisis in which he found himself engaged ; not as though he were legislating for Switzerland, but having regard to the country of his adoption. “Born in a republic,” he said, “having had for twenty years before my eyes a picture of all the passions which disturb liberty, of political fanaticism, of the spirit of party, of the abuse of words and of the public misfortune, the only result of these storms, I have at least learned to distrust trenchant opinion, systematic experiments, violence, injustice, perverse or perverted judgments which are born even in necessary revolutions, as noxious insects spring into life under the summer sun. It is not at the age of forty

<sup>1</sup> 1749-1800.

that a wise republican who has spent twenty years of his life amidst political tempests will become the accomplice of any one's madness." Mallet du Pan's *Considerations on the French Revolution* contain much that is historically valuable, side by side with philosophical ideas of no inconsiderable merit. He was also a journalist of talent, of a lofty independence of mind, and wrote, on the close of the Egyptian expedition: "Bonaparte has his head in the clouds; his career is a poem, his imagination a storehouse of heroic romance, his stage an arena open to all the madness of resolve or ambition. Who shall fix the point at which he will arrive? Is he sufficiently master of things, of time, and of fortune, to fix it himself?" The answer is a chapter of history.

André Morellet,<sup>1</sup> one of the many Frenchmen who had ardently desired the Revolution, who suffered from its excesses, and who still remained faithful to their convictions, undismayed by all that the selfish and the violent had done to discredit the name of the Republic, lived a long life full of activity and consistent effort. One of the earliest apostles of free trade in France, this liberal-minded abbé was still found raising his voice in its favour in his eighty-eighth year, in the last representative chamber of the Empire. He belonged to the school of economists which had Turgot for one of its ablest exponents, and Voltaire amongst its champions. Morellet was the friend of both; and the latter bore witness to the independent moral courage of his friend, by attaching to him the *soubriquet* of *Mords-les*—"Bite 'em." He deserved the name by his controversial force, and by the eagerness with which he undertook the cause of justice, of common sense, of the oppressed, in the face of all opposition and personal danger. He had many opportunities of urging his opinions, especially in the *Nouvelles Politiques*, a moderate Liberal journal founded in 1792, in which he was associated with

<sup>1</sup> 1727-1819.

Suard, Lacretelle, and others. He wrote independently, as well, in pamphlets which were never feeble, which never struck without reaching their mark, and which were frequently attended by the result to which he aspired. He had been an Academician from 1785, so that it was not as a mere journalist that he wrote his *Vision of Charles Palissot*, satirising the latter's comedy of *The Philosophers*, or his *Theory of Paradox* against Linguet, or his *Cry of Families*.<sup>1</sup> The object of this treatise was to obtain a repeal of the barbarous decree whereby the property of those who were condemned by revolutionary tribunals was confiscated, and their relatives were reduced to pauperism. It was not until after the fall of the terrorists that Morellet's pamphlet appeared, and not until the Convention had refused to cancel the decree of those who had gone before them. A single passage will show the force, both of argument and of satire, wielded by this powerful pen.

"I must say it, and I must believe that I have brought to light a worthy sentiment concealed in the depth of the human heart: the refusal from henceforth even to listen to the petition of so many unfortunate families is, on the part of the Convention, a homage rendered to the justice of their cause. Terrified by the alleged dangers whereby the public credit is said to be menaced by the re-endowment of children with the property of their unjustly condemned fathers, our representatives put away from them the sight of these victims, whom they believe they have no power to relieve of their fate, in order to spare themselves a too painful sentiment. They turn aside their heads whilst they strike them. They set aside the demand of the unfortunate, because they feel that it is too just to be rejected; but this very sentiment of justice and humanity convinces me that they will not long maintain such a refusal."

<sup>1</sup> Lacretelle, in his *History of the Convention*, speaks of it in high terms. "Morellet," the latter says, "the judicious and powerful antagonist of every kind of iniquity, as of every kind of fiscal ineptitude, pleaded the cause of families in a work full of force and courage."

In the end the Convention had to yield to public opinion, which Morellet had roused into an irresistible activity. His *Apology for Philosophy against those who charge it with the troubles of the Revolution*, published in 1796, is an able and effective defence of the position of Montesquieu and Turgot. "Philosophy," he says in one part, "has taught people their political evils and the vices of their government, and indicated the mode of curing them; but it cannot be imputed to it as a crime that it has enlightened men on this important subject. When an evil is well known and has a sure and specific remedy, if he who administers the remedy kills his patient, through ignorance of the proper treatment, it is not just to turn upon the physician who has revealed the malady, who recommended its treatment, and who suggested the cure." In addition to the controversial works here mentioned, Morellet left behind him an interesting volume of *Memoirs*.

Count Joseph de Maistre,<sup>1</sup> born at Chambéry, of a family long settled there, but originally from Languedoc, has had so much influence on France that we must give him a place here. In 1793 he was made a senator of Savoy, but after the French had seized that kingdom he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Republic, and sought refuge at Lausanne. From Neuchâtel he issued, in 1796, his *Considerations upon the French Revolution*, in which the most characteristic standpoint is that the French Revolution, in common with all the agitations and operations of mankind, proceeded from a divine order and direction, and by virtue of this sanction alone overcame all obstacles. Under the Consulate and Empire, de Maistre enjoyed the confidence of the Sardinian Government, which in 1802 he represented at the Court of St. Petersburg. He resided in Russia no less than fourteen years, and wrote there his *Essay on the Generating Principle of the Constitution*, in which he

<sup>1</sup> 1754-1821.



lays down the principle that the divine power is the only source of all authority on earth, represented by the sovereign and the aristocracy, that the rights of the people emanate from royalty, and that it is an illusion and a danger to let them depend on a written and clearly defined contract. A couple of years before his death he had published a work *On the Pope*, which is a bold apology for the spiritual and temporal power of the Papacy. He claims for the pope, in the interests of the nations themselves, against the abuses of royalty, and as a defence against the feebleness or violence of popular assemblies, the right of being the sovereign and infallible arbiter in all political discussions.<sup>1</sup> He left some of the fruits of his experience in a posthumous work, the *Soirées of St. Petersburg*, which, composed of eleven conversations between a worldly Roman Catholic, an orthodox senator rather inclined to mysticism, and a count, de Maistre himself, tries to prove that man is radically degraded and never innocent; that therefore the whole of humanity must be punished; that a nation is lost which abolishes punishments; that thus "the hangman ought to have in society a grand and terrible place," though he is not principal agent of the great law of destruction; a glory which belongs to the soldier, whose functions are similar to those of the hangman. Divine war accomplishes the mysterious expiation which no human being can escape. "At the precise moment caused by men and prescribed by justice, God advances to avenge the iniquity which the inhabitants of this world have committed against Him. The earth, thirsting after blood, opens its mouth (a

<sup>1</sup> J. de Maistre, in his *Correspondance Diplomatique*, says, however, of the coronation of Napoleon by Pope Pius VII., "The crimes of an Alexander VI. are less revolting than this hideous apostasy of his feeble successor. . . I wish, with all my heart, that the unhappy pontiff would go to Saint Domingo, to crown Dessalines. When once a man of his rank and character forgets both so far, what one must wish then is that he should finally degrade himself so as to become nothing but a puppet, without any influence." This is certainly treating a papal final decision by no means apologetically.

Biblical expression) to receive it, and retain it in its bosom until the moment has arrived when it must restore it." <sup>1</sup> These Ultramontane doctrines were also maintained in two other of his posthumous works, in his *Letters to a Russian Gentleman*, in which he defends the inquisition, and in his *Four Unpublished Chapters on Russia*, in which he opposes the emancipation of the serfs and the too sudden introduction of sciences in Russia. His works are considered paradoxical, but eminently suggestive; his style is nearly always original, lively, and brilliant, though sometimes turgidly rhetorical; and many admire even yet the writings of this champion of absolutist principles who do not at all share his opinions. In order that the reader may partly judge for himself, we shall give a passage from *The Sairées of St. Petersburg*.

"Where then is innocence, I pray? Where is the just? Is he around this table? Great God! who indeed could believe in such an excess of madness if we were not every moment witness of it? Often I think of this passage in the Bible, in which it is said, 'It shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with candles.'<sup>2</sup> Let us have the courage to visit our hearts with candles, and we shall no longer dare pronounce, except with blushes, the words virtue, justice, and innocence. Let us begin by examining the evil which is in us, and let us turn pale whilst casting a courageous look at the bottom of this abyss; for it is impossible to know the number of our transgressions, and it is not the less so to know in how far some guilty action or other has injured the general order and opposed the plans of the eternal Legislator. Let us think then of this frightful communication of crimes which exists between men—complicity, advice, example, approval—terrible words on which we ought continually to meditate! What sensible man can think without shuddering of the inordinate action which he has exercised on his fellow creatures, and of the possible consequences of this fatal influence? Man is rarely guilty by himself; it is seldom that one crime does not lead to another. Where are the limits of responsibility? Hence

<sup>1</sup> *Conversation VII.*

<sup>2</sup> Zephaniah i. 12.

this luminous trait which sparkles amongst a thousand others in the Psalms, 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me.'<sup>1</sup>

\* After having thus meditated upon our crimes, another examination, more sad perhaps, that of our virtues, presents itself before us. What a frightful research would be that one which had for its object the small number, the falsehood, and the inconsistency of these virtues? Before all we should have to examine their foundations. Alas! they are rather determined by prejudices than by considerations of the general order founded upon the divine will. An action revolts us much less because it is bad than because it is shameful.

"It is not crime we fear, it is dishonour; and provided opinion removes the shame, or even replaces it by glory, as it has the power to do, we boldly commit the crime; and man, thus disposed, is called without any more ado a *just* or at least an *honest* man; and who knows if he does not thank God because he is not like one of these! . . . This is a madness for which the smallest reflection ought to make us blush. No doubt it was profound wisdom amongst the Romans to call by the same name force and virtue. In fact, there is no virtue properly so called without a victory over ourselves, and all that does not cost us something is worth nothing for us. Let us take away from these miserable virtues that which we owe to mood, to honour, to opinion, to pride, to powerlessness, and to circumstances; what will remain to us? Alas! very little. I do not fear to acknowledge it to you. I never think of this frightful subject without being tempted to throw myself upon the ground like a guilty man who craves for mercy; without accepting beforehand all the evils which might fall on my head, as a slight compensation for the immense debt which I have contracted with eternal justice. However, you cannot believe how many people, in my lifetime, have told me that I was a *very honest man*."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xix. 12 and 13.

<sup>2</sup> "Où est donc l'innocence, je vous en prie? Où est le juste? est-il ici autour de cette table? Grand Dieu, où! qui pourrait donc croire un tel excès de bêtise, si nous n'en étions pas les témoins à tous momens? Souvent je songe à cet endroit de la Bible où il est dit: Je crains l'homme avec des

An eminent French historian,<sup>1</sup> in speaking of de Maistre, says :—

“Voltaire had cleverly foreseen and foretold that the last lampes.” Ayons nous-mêmes le courage de visiter nos crimes sous des lampes, et nous n'oserons plus prétendre qu'en rougissant les yeux de vertu, de justice, et d'innocence. Commençons par examiner le mal qui est en nous, et passons en plongeant un regard courageux au fond de cet abîme : car il est impossible de connaître le nombre de nos transgressions et il ne l'est pas moins de savoir jusqu'à quel point tel ou tel acte coupable a blessé l'ordre général et contrarié les plans du législateur éternel. Songeons ensuite à cette épouvantable comminication de crimes qui existe entre les hommes, complicité, conseil, exemple, approbation, mots terribles qu'il faudrait multiplier sans cesse. Quel homme sensé pourra singer sans frémir à l'action déshonnorable qu'il a exercée sur ses semblables, et aux suites possibles de cette funeste influence ? Rarement l'homme se rend coupable seul ; rarement un crime n'en produit pas un autre. Où sont les bornes de la responsabilité ? De là se traitent maintenant qui étendelle entre mille autres dans le livre des peccateurs. *“ Quel homme peut reconnaître toute l'étendue de ses péchés ? O Dieu ! pardonne-moi de croire que j'en sçais, et pardonne-moi cette d'ignorance.”*

“Après avoir ainsi médité sur nos crimes, il se présente à nous un autre examen encore plus triste, peut-être, c'est celui de nos vertus. Quelle est la vertu la plus belle que celle qui aurait pour objet le petit nombre, la faiblesse, et l'inconstance de ces vertus ! il faudrait avant tout en sonder les bases : hélas ! elles sont bien plutôt déterminées par le préjugé que par les considérations de l'ordre général posé sur la volonté divine. Une action nous revolté bien moins parce qu'elle est mauvaise, que parce qu'elle est honteuse.

“Ce n'est pas le crime que tout orgueilleux, c'est le déshonneur ; et pourvu que Vénus, de la honte, ou même y substitue la gloire, comme elle en est bien la maîtresse, nous commettons le crime hardiment, et l'homme ainsi disposé s'appelle sans façon paillard, ou tout au moins *bon vivant* : et qui sait s'il ne trompe pas Dieu ou n'être pas devenu un déshonneur ? . . . C'est un délire dont la malheure réflexion doit nous faire rougir. Ce fut sans doute avec une profonde sagesse que les Romains appelaient de même nom la force et la vertu. Il n'y en effet point de vertu proprement dite sans victoire sur nous-mêmes, et tout ce qui ne nous coûte rien, ne nous vaut rien. Otons de nos misérables vertus ce que nous devons au tempérament, à l'honneur, à l'orgueil, à l'impulsion et aux circonstances ; que nous restera-t-il ? Hélas ! bien peu de chose, je ne craints pas de vous le confesser : jamais je ne me suis été épouvantable sujet sans être tenté de me jeter à terre comme un coupable qui demande grâce, sans excepter d'excuser tous les crimes qui paraissent tomber sur ma tête, comme une légère compensation de la dette immense que j'ai contractée envers l'éternelle justice. Cependant vous ne sauriez croire combien de gens, dans ma vie, m'ont dit que j'étais un fort honnête homme.”

<sup>1</sup> Michaud, *Histoire du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*. “Jusqu'à 18 Brumaire,” bk. v. ch. 2.



barbarians in this age of tolerance would be found amongst the magistrates. It is, indeed, a disease amongst those who, from father to son, have been accustomed to judge, condemn, dispose of human life—it is a disease to feel the need for always exercising that terrible function. And I do not speak of the sanguinary pleasure which certain men could take in it, but rather of the pride of exercising so lofty an authority. After the power of God, which is *to create*, the highest power, no doubt, is that of *killing*. That is why it becomes necessary to those who legally possessed it once. This was the genius of the greatest writer of the Restoration, de Maistre, a judge at Chambéry, whose audacious little book, not at all defensive, blamed, on the contrary, Reason, and challenged it to defend itself. In order to write such a book, to exclude light so far, it was necessary not to be ignorant, but to have cultivated false science and absurdity, to have always lived in a pretended science of scholasticism and of seminaries. Thus in certain Alpine valleys which the sun does not reach at noon, there reigns not a feeble light, but, what is worse, a wrong light—some shadows, some fogs here, there, upon frozen spots; on the most barren, sharp, brilliant points, which delude. The author has so well succeeded, that, *even at noon*, the sun does not reach his valley. Since Bossuet and Louis XIV. he ignores everything, and therefore despises everything, rejects everything together, and without argument. All that he knows of the world is *the fall*, and the beautiful Christian justice where the innocent pays for the guilty. ‘Let us not grieve for the grand massacres of innocents which always took place on the earth.’ It is the method by which the heavenly gardener, by lopping off some branches, renders the others fertile. There, the author enumerates the immense massacres which God has allowed; it seems that he takes pleasure in them, and that (as in the ancient taurobolium) he revives in a bath of blood. . . . This work appeared in 1796 during the brilliant campaign of Italy. . . . The book of de Maistre, which seems to promise Bonaparte, was in reality the manifesto of the counter-revolution.”<sup>1</sup>

Napoleon Bonaparte<sup>2</sup> claims a passage in our record with

<sup>1</sup> The *Considerations upon the French Revolution* appeared, as we have already stated, in 1796.

<sup>2</sup> 1769-1821.

as much right as a mere author of books ; for the victories which he achieved over the enemies of his country, and over his country itself, were not won only upon the battle-field. His proclamations and despatches were the work of a man of great mental power, of a man whose words became actions, as his actions inspired enthusiasm. Some of his addresses to his soldiers deserve to be compared with not a few of those recorded by historians of the ancient Greek and Roman generals, and breathe the same spirit of rapine. Witness this one, to the ill-clad and ill-fed soldiers of the army of Italy, upon his assumption of the command :—

“Soldiers, you are badly fed and almost naked. The government owes you much, but it can do nothing for you. Your patience and your courage do you honour, but they procure you neither profit nor glory. I am about to lead you into the most fertile plains in the world ; there you will find large towns and rich provinces ; there you will find honour, glory, and wealth. Soldiers of Italy, could you fail of courage ?”

This allocution is not commonplace ; I do not say that it was very lofty or very heroic ; but it was undoubtedly of a nature to rouse the enthusiasm and the cupidity of the ragged horde. Another proclamation to the same army, after its early successes, dated from Milan, May 20, 1796, is more highly coloured :—

“Soldiers, you have poured like a torrent from the heights of the Apennines ; you have routed and dispersed all that opposed your progress. Piedmont, delivered from Austrian tyranny, has given itself up to its natural feelings of peace and friendship towards France. Milan is yours, and the tricolor floats over the whole of Lombardy. The dukes of Parma and Modena owe their political existence solely to your generosity. The army which haughtily threatened you finds no barrier to assure it against your courage ; the Po, the Ticino, the Adda, have not been able to check you for a single day ; these boasted

bulwarks of Italy have been found wanting ; you have crossed them as rapidly as you crossed the Apennine. So many successes have brought joy to the heart of the country ; your representatives have ordered a festival to be held, dedicated to your victories, which is celebrated in all the communes of the republic. There your fathers, your mothers, your wives, your sisters, your sweet-hearts, rejoice at your triumphs, and proudly boast that they are related to you. Yes, soldiers, you have done much. But is there nothing left for you to do ? Shall they say of us that we have known how to conquer, but that we have not known how to profit by victory ? Shall posterity reproach you with having found Capua in Lombardy ? Nay, I see you already rushing to arms. A cowardly repose fatigues you ; days lost for glory are also lost to happiness. Well, let us advance ! We have still forced marches to make, enemies to subdue, laurels to gather, insults to avenge. Let those who have sharpened the daggers of civil war in France, who have basely assassinated our ministers, who have burned our vessels at Toulon, tremble. The hour of vengeance has struck ! But let the nations not be uneasy ; we are friends of all nations, and more particularly of the descendants of Brutus, Scipio, and the great men whom we have taken as our models. To rebuild the Capitol, to place there in honour the statues of the heroes who have become famous ; to arouse the Roman people, oppressed by ages of servitude, such shall be the fruit of our victories. They shall create an epoch in posterity ; you shall have the deathless glory of changing the face of the most beautiful country in Europe. The French people, free and respected, shall give to Europe glorious peace, which shall repay it for the sacrifices of every kind which it has made during the last six years. Then you shall return to your homes, and your fellow-citizens shall point to you and say : ‘He was one of the army of Italy !’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Soldats ! vous vous êtes précipités comme un torrent du haut de l’Apennin ; vous avez culbuté, dispersé, éparpillé tout ce qui s’opposait à votre marche. Le Piémont délivré de la tyrannie autrichienne, s’est livré à ses sentimens naturels de paix et d’amitié pour la France. Milan est à vous et le pavillon tricolore flotte dans toute la Lombardie. Les ducs de Parme et de Modène ne doivent leur existence politique qu’à votre générosité. L’armée qui vous menaçait avec tant d’orgueil ne trouve plus de barrière qui la rassure

In this proclamation the general is nothing ; the dread name of France is hardly anything ; the soldiers are everything. It is nearly all "you" from beginning to end ; the "we" is more modestly heard. Bonaparte created courage, even if it had not existed before, for he made the meanest and weakest in his army believe himself a redoubtable hero. Every step of his career was marked by proclamations and addresses as vigorous and as stirring as these. It may be that none of them was more sublime than that of Henri de la Rochejaquelein<sup>1</sup> to his peasant-soldiers in the Vendée : " If I advance, follow me ; if I die, avenge me ; if I shrink, slay me ! " But it cannot be doubted that the earlier proclamations of Bona-

contre votre courage. Le Pô, le Tessin, l'Adda n'ont pu vous arrêter un seul jour ; ces boulevards vantés de l'Italie ont été insuffisants ; vous les avez franchis aussi rapidement que l'Apennin. Tant de succès ont porté la joie dans le sein de la patrie ; vos représentants ont ordonné une fête dédiée à vos victoires, célébrée dans toutes les communes de la république. Là, vos pères, vos mères, vos épouses, vos sœurs, vos amantes se réjouissent de vos succès et se vantent avec orgueil de vous appartenir. Oui, soldats, vous avez beaucoup fait ; mais ne vous reste-t-il donc plus rien à faire ? Dira-t-on de nous que nous avons su vaincre, mais que nous n'avons pas su profiter de la victoire ? La postérité nous reprochera-t-elle d'avoir trouvé Capoue dans la Lombardie ? Mais je vous vois déjà courir aux armes ; un lâche repos vous fatigue ; les journées perdues pour la gloire le sont pour le bonheur. Eh bien, partons ! Nous avons encore des marches forcées à faire, des ennemis à soumettre, des lauriers à cueillir, des injures à venger. Que ceux qui ont aiguisé les poignards de la guerre civile en France, qui ont lâchement assassiné nos ministres, incendié nos vaisseaux à Toulon, tremblent ; l'heure de la vengeance a sonné. Mais que les peuples soient sans inquiétude ; nous sommes amis de tous les peuples, et plus particulièrement des descendants des Brutus, des Scipions et des grands hommes que nous avons pris pour modèles. Rétablir le Capitole, y placer avec honneur les statues des héros qui se rendirent célèbres, réveiller le peuple romain, engourdi par plusieurs siècles d'esclavage, tel sera le fruit de vos victoires. Elles feront époque dans la postérité. Vous aurez la gloire immortelle de changer la face de la plus belle partie de l'Europe. Le peuple français, libre, respecté du monde entier, donnera à l'Europe une paix glorieuse qui l'indemnifiera des sacrifices de toutes espèces qu'il a faits depuis six ans. Vous rentrerez alors dans vos foyers, et vos concitoyens diront en vous montrant : Il était de l'armée d'Italie. — *Correspondance de Napoléon I<sup>er</sup>, No. 461.*

<sup>1</sup> 1772-1794.



parte breathe the spirit of the Revolution in its warlike aspect, triumphant over its enemies, intoxicated with glory transformed by success and ambition into the spirit of the Empire. They are the same in the streets of Paris as on the plains of Italy or the shores of the English Channel ; as ardent and as full of the bathos of the "*commediantes*" and "*tragediantes*" when sealing the doom of the Directory as they had been whilst their utterer was the ready instrument of the Five.

In his youth Napoleon wrote some *Regulations* for a society of officers of the regiment of la Fère, called *la Calotte* (1788), only remarkable for their extreme democratic tendency ; a *Letter to M. Matteo Buttafuoco, Deputy of Corsica at the National Assembly* (1790), in which the deputy is violently attacked on account of his aristocratical tendencies ; a *History of Corsica*, in two small volumes, which was rigidly suppressed by the police during the first Empire ; and was of no literary value, though it has been stated that Mirabeau said "that it seemed to give promise of a historian of the first rank ;"<sup>1</sup> a reply to a subject proposed by the Academy of Lyons in 1789 : "*To determine the Truths and the Sentiments which it is the most needful to inculcate in Mankind for its happiness,*" and which did not receive the prize ; the *Supper at Beaucaire* (1793), a conversation that takes place between two merchants from Marseilles, a native of Nîmes, a manufacturer of Montpellier, and a military man, and in which the latter, who is probably Bonaparte himself, tries to prove the folly of the South in rebelling against the Convention. This pamphlet is written from a sound political standpoint ; the Government and the Committees being defended by arguments which have nothing in common with the declamatory and philosophical phrases then in fashion. Bona-

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte, Prince de Canino, écrits par lui-même.* 1838.

parte wrote also several not very interesting pamphlets, which go far to prove that he would most probably not have made the same reputation as a literary man which he made as a general. What share Napoleon had in writing in St. Helena the *Memoirs to serve for the History of France under the Reign of Napoleon* cannot be known with certainty. They are said to have been dictated by him to the generals Geurgaud and Montholon, who shared his captivity.



## BOOK VIII.

### THE EMPIRE AND THE RESTORATION.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. THE POETS.

WHEN the Convention formally decreed that there should be a God, and that the soul should be immortal, two poets celebrated the occasion — Marie-Joseph Chénier and Jacques Delille.<sup>1</sup> It was no mere perfunctory duty with either of them. The unstable masses had eagerly adopted the worship of Reason, and the bulk of them had no less eagerly displayed their disgust with this short-lived atheism, by returning to the God of their fathers. But there was no necessity for recantation with men like Chénier and Delille. The latter, who, though a consistent royalist, had not quitted France, being content to wait in obscurity for the reaction which he knew must come sooner or later; robbed for a while of his position, of his growing fame, of the social life in which he had taken so much delight, pitied his exiled friends, and employed himself in writing, with no dainty circumscriptions, verses which were not to see the light of day until the storm had passed over his head. Amongst these verses was the dithyramb *On the Immortality of the Soul*, which was couched in less measured terms than the ode of Chénier, and which,

<sup>1</sup> 1738-1813.



of course, was not given to the public. The reader will be able to judge of the boldness of the poet by the following strophes :—

“Tyrants I hate ! And, e'en in childhood's hour,  
How oft my curses have their car pursued :  
My haughty impotence despised their power ;  
I had sung Cato's praise, though Cæsar's might I viewed.”<sup>1</sup>

No less eloquent are the two following stanzas :—

“Yes. You who have Olympus' thunders hurled,  
And Law's eternal altars dare destroy,  
Ye dastardly oppressors of the world,  
Tremble ! your doom is immortality.

“And you, whom sorrow for a while o'erwhelms,  
Whom a God watches with paternal eye,  
Pilgrims now toiling on through foreign realms,  
Rejoice ! your prize is immortality.”<sup>2</sup>

The abbé Delille was happy enough to live into the age which restored to France the institutions which he cherished, and to take part in the literary activity of the Empire, by his didactic poem on *l'Homme des Champs* (*the Rustic*), published in 1800, and the one on *Pity*, which appeared three years later. The latter is little more than a string of moral maxims

<sup>1</sup> “Que je hais les tyrants ! combien dès l'enfance  
Mes imprécations ont poursuivi leur char !  
Ma faiblesse superbe insulte à leur puissance :  
J'aurais chanté Caton à l'aspect de César.”

<sup>2</sup> “Oni vous, qui de l'Olympe usurpant le tonnerre,  
Des éternelles lois renversez les autels ;  
Lâches oppresseurs de la terre,  
Tremblez, vous êtes immortels !

“Et vous, vous du malheur victimes passagères,  
Sur qui veillent d'un Dieu les regards paternels,  
Voyageurs d'un moment aux terres étrangères,  
Consolez-vous, vous êtes immortels !”

in verse, rarely rising above mediocrity, and more grand in idea than in profundity and execution. He had, in the events of his unhappy country, abundant material for the exercise of his muse; but it can hardly be said that he attained to the dignity of grief with which a greater genius might easily have covered himself.

As early as 1769 Delille had translated the *Georgics* of Virgil into elegant verse; and in 1782 he wrote a monotonously pretty poem on *Gardens*; but it was not until the close of the century that he began to pour forth a continuous stream of translations and descriptive pieces which almost, without the intermission of a year, lasted until his death. Amongst the former we have the *Æneid*, *Paradise Lost*, and Pope's *Essay on Man*; amongst the latter, *Imagination*, the *Three Kingdoms of Nature*, and *Convention*. Here, no doubt, is the evidence of vast industry, a catholic taste, a uniform simplicity of theme. And, indeed, if Delille's merits as a poet are not of the highest order, they are at least such as commend him to lovers of a pure, quiet, and amiable style. His bitterest vein was all but exhausted in the poem on *Pity*; but its place was filled by a good-natured satire, of which the following description of *Coffee* may serve for example:—

“ Coffee affords a good restoring draught,  
Which clears the fumes of wine too freely quaffed  
By her you gain, when you the table quit,  
A calm more courteous and a brighter wit;  
And soon recovered by her powerful aid,  
You are not of a second feast afraid.  
She by the god of Verse is praised and loved,  
The poet's genius is by her improved,  
And frigid rhymers, if at times inspired,  
Write their best lines by coffee's perfume fired.  
She can enliven philosophic plan,  
And make an analyst a pleasant man  
Statesmen, through her, well feasted and content,

Form happy schemes of better government. . . .  
 Knowledge sometimes to journalists she brings  
 Of court intrigues and deep designs of kings ;  
 Peace, truces, wars, she to his dreams can show,  
 And lets him, for six sous, the world o'erthrow."<sup>1</sup>

The picture was not overdrawn seventy years ago, and it is not overdrawn to-day.

Louis, Marquis de Fontanes,<sup>2</sup> a poet-journalist, with even less pretension to originality than Delille, had the honour—if it be an honour—of being a sort of poet-laureate to Napoleon. Born at Niort, he came up to Paris at an early age, and joined the staff of the *Mercur*e and the *Almanach des Muses*. He was proscribed during the Revolution, and afterwards during the Directory, went to England, and there made the acquaintance of de Chateaubriand. When the Empire was established, he became the intimate friend of a sister of Bonaparte, Madame Bacciochi, and was chosen president of the legislative body, a member of the Institute, and grand-master of the University. Consequently, much of what he wrote was perfunctory ; and it is to his credit that his pane-

<sup>1</sup> " Le café vous présente une heureuse liqueur  
 Qui d'un vin trop fumeux chassera la vapeur ;  
 Vous obtiendrez par elle, en désertant la table,  
 Un esprit plus ouvert, un sang-froid plus aimable ;  
 Bientôt, mieux disposé par ses puissants effets ;  
 Vous pourrez vous asseoir à de nouveaux banquets ;  
 Elle est du Dieu des vers honorée et chérie.  
 On dit que du poëte elle sert le génie,  
 Que plus d'un froid rimeur, quelquefois réchauffé,  
 A dû de meilleurs vers au parfum du café.  
 Il peut du philosophe égayer les systèmes,  
 Rendre aimables, badins, les géomètres mêmes ;  
 Par lui l'homme d'État, dispos après dîner,  
 Forme l'heureux projet de nous mieux gouverner. . . .  
 Au nouvelliste enfin il révèle parfois  
 Les intrigues des cours et les secrets des rois,  
 L'aide à rêver la paix, l'armistice, la guerre,  
 Et lui fait, pour six sous, bouleverser la terre."

<sup>2</sup> 1757-1821.

gyrics are not more fulsome than they are. He writes always gracefully and correctly, apparently without much effort, and certainly without any remarkable force or harmony. Amongst his best poems I may mention *The Carthusian Convent of Paris*, the *Sacred Books*, the *Day of the Dead*, and a specially pleasant allegory on the subject of Tasso, addressed to his intimate friend Chateaubriand. Of the other lesser lights of poetry who moved in the same orbit with Delille, let us be content to mention Esmenard,<sup>1</sup> the author of a descriptive poem on *Navigation*; Boisjolin,<sup>2</sup> a French Erasmus Darwin, who versified his thoughts on *Botany*; Castel,<sup>3</sup> who did the like thing for *Plants*; Gudin,<sup>4</sup> who followed the fashion with his *Astronomy*; Ricard,<sup>5</sup> with his *Globe*; and Aimé-Martin,<sup>6</sup> with his versified *Letters to Sophia on Physics, Chemistry, and Natural History*.

## § 2. THE DRAMATISTS OF THE EMPIRE.

The drama of the Empire and Restoration was continuous with that of the later revolutionary epoch; and in spite of all that Marie-Joseph Chénier could do, the French stage at the beginning of the present century displays nothing so much as the exhaustion of the classical inspiration which had hitherto served dramatists in lieu of originality. System had too long been confounded with genius; and at the time which we are now considering, whilst the system remained the genius was almost entirely absent. Alexandre Duval<sup>7</sup> sufficiently satirised himself and his contemporaries when he offered to construct the plan of a piece for a younger and more ambitious poet.<sup>8</sup> For him nothing could have been

<sup>1</sup> 1769-1811.

<sup>2</sup> 1761-1841.

<sup>3</sup> 1758-1832.

<sup>4</sup> 1738-1812.

<sup>5</sup> 1741-1803.

<sup>6</sup> 1781-1847.

<sup>7</sup> 1767-1842.

<sup>8</sup> Demogot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 545.



more easy ; it was but a kind of problem in mensuration, of which he knew the process and the solution by heart. Given the subject, the number of acts and scenes required, the construction of a classical play was a mere matter of arrangement, in which the most successful arranger would be the one that was most ingenious. Of course it remained for the author to trick out and decorate this framework with a few poetical expressions, a few studies of character, a few novel ideas, according to his own taste or the taste of the public. In this latter part of the work lay the need for genius ; and for a poetic and dramatic genius of which the Empire knew little. Well might Ducis sigh : " Ah, my friend, what a hard thing it is to keep fine acts going upon remorse ! " A certain M. Brifaut<sup>1</sup> has immortalised himself by a larger share than usual of the fatal facility of his age ; for having written half a play with Spanish names and circumstances, and then changed his mind, he straightway located his scene in ancient Assyria, and took for his title *Ninus II.*

Of course the dramatists were not all Brifauts. Raynouard,<sup>2</sup> worked more conscientiously in his *Templars*, which was at least faithful to history, and sketched with as much care and appreciation of local and temporal colour as its author was capable of. It deserves to be compared with some of Chénier's best, and it dispensed with the too evident desire to make political converts, which, as I have said, was Chénier's great failing. But it lacks the natural play of human cause and effect ; it is rather a descriptive poem than a tragedy of action.<sup>3</sup> " Moral Conversations on the subject of the

<sup>1</sup> 1781-1857.

<sup>2</sup> 1761-1806.

<sup>3</sup> Madame de Staël well expressed the weakness of dramatic authorship at this epoch. " We shall finish," she said, " by seeing on the stage nothing but heroic marionnettes, sacrificing love to duty, preferring death to slavery, inspired by antithesis in their actions as in their words, but without any relation to that marvellous creature called man, with that terrible destiny which alternately carries him along and pursues him."

Templars" would have been a good title for it, though it might not have drawn so well on a play-bill. "Moral Conversations on the subject of Sylla" would have described *Sylla*, a play of de Jouy,<sup>1</sup> which yet had a fair success upon the stage, though only the last act can boast of any of the stir which we have come to think necessary to a drama.

Jean-François Ducis,<sup>2</sup> a man of great independence of character, referred to above as an indefatigable adapter of Shakspeare, the first Frenchman who made a systematic attempt to naturalise the English dramatist in France, had much of the true perception of a dramatic author, and was sincerely anxious to break through the slavish trammels willingly adapted by the devotion of his contemporaries to the used-up models of the classic stage. From 1769 to the close of the century he was engaged in his self-appointed task. *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, followed one another at intervals, until the "Bridaine<sup>3</sup> of tragedy," as Thomas called him, perceived that he had done as much in this line as his countrymen were willing or able to appreciate. The actors began to decline the parts assigned to them; and he tells one of his correspondents that everybody reproached him with the *genre terrible* which he had adopted. "Monsieur Ducis," somebody said to him, "withhold for a time these alarming pictures; you can resume them when you please; but give us a tender play, in the spirit of *Inès* or *Zaire*." For another of his imitations he had recourse to Sophocles, adapting the *Œdipus* with some success, considering that it had been familiar in France for more than a century. It is easy to understand the position assumed by Ducis in his so-called Shakspearcan plays; and it is impossible not to acknowledge the value of his work;

<sup>1</sup> 1764-1816.

<sup>2</sup> 1733-1816.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Bridaine (1731-1767) was a celebrated preacher, who delighted, above all, in depicting the terrible punishments awaiting the sinner.

the more so because, if he had been ambitious of a purely original fame, he could have done far better than most of his fellow-dramatists. Nay, he did better as it was. He wrote *Abufar, or the Arab Family*, and *Fædor and Wladimir, or the Siberian Family*, which prove that he had real dramatic force, and much freshness of imagination. It would seem, however, that he distrusted his powers ; for the last fifteen or sixteen years of his life were almost barren of literary results. In addition to his plays, I must not omit to mention a volume of fugitive poems, many of which possess uncommon beauty and purity. Here is the beginning of the ode *To my Household Gods* :—

“Ye little gods with whom I dwell,  
 Companions of my poverty,  
 Who contemplate with friendly eye  
 My easy chair and hermit cell,  
 My bed the hue of Carmelite,  
 My wardrobe made of walnut bright.  
 O my Penates, household gods !  
 Whose cherished presence safety bodes,  
 If I have never, for your sakes,  
 Grudged ample feast of dainty cakes,  
 For you have poured libations meet  
 Of wine, milk, honey, pure and sweet ;  
 Then guard our door with faithful care,  
 Watch every hinge and bolt and bar,  
 Not lest some burglar in should break ;  
 For what on earth is there to take ?  
 No treasures lodge in my abode :  
 I need no escort on the road :  
 And only one short prayer I make,  
 That competence may with us stay,  
 And virtue never scape away.”<sup>1</sup>

“Petits dieux avec qui j’habite,	Mon lit couleur de carmélite,
Compagnons de ma pauvreté,	Et mon armoire de noyer,
Vous dont l’œil voit avec bonté	O mes Pénates, mes dieux lares,
Mon fauteuil, mes chenets d’ermite,	Chers protecteurs de mon foyer,

The havoc played by the classical fashion was naturally less painfully evident in comedy than in tragedy; but yet the French stage has nothing great to show us during this period, even in respect of comedy. It is not much to say that the comic dramas of the Empire and Restoration are better of their kind than the tragedies; but at least so much can be said with truth. Picard<sup>1</sup> was one of the best and most fertile producers. A hard-working author, rarely content with less than a dozen hours at his desk in the course of a day, a tolerably shrewd observer of humanity between whiles, who was conscientious enough to write the biographies of his characters before he dressed them for the stage, he succeeded in giving many faithful pictures of human follies, accidents, and weaknesses. He was a satirist with a purpose, moreover, having a moral for every act, and a maxim to point every moral. He laboured to do for manners what Chénier laboured to do for politics, and to a certain extent he undoubtedly succeeded. Collin d'Harleville,<sup>2</sup> who died whilst Picard was comparatively young, wrote less than the latter, and in a less dramatic form. He too was bitten by the usual necessity of making his characters help him out with interminable soliloquies, and dialogues which rather recited the author's general idea of human nature than betrayed, as do the dialogues of a couple of excited human beings, the feelings and passions of their own hearts. Nevertheless he had force and ardour, and it was enthusiasm for his art, not the accidental bent of a professional man of letters, which first induced him to write plays. He had been brought up as a lawyer, and followed

Si mes mains, pour vous festoyer,  
De gâteaux ne sont point avares,  
Si j'ai souvent versé pour vous  
Le vin, le miel, au lait si doux,  
Oh, veillez bien sur notre porte,  
Sur nos gonds et sur nos verrous.  
Non point par la peur des blous :

Car que voulez-vous qu'en m'emporte ?  
Je n'ai ni trésors ni bijoux,  
Je peux voyager sans escorte.  
Mes vœux sont courts ; les vôtres tous  
Qu'un peu d'aisance entre chez nous,  
Que jamais la vertu n'en soit.

<sup>1</sup> 1769-1828

<sup>2</sup> 1755-1806.



his profession until he felt and gave effect to his satirical vein. His best comedies are the *Optimist*, the *Old Bachelor*, and *Castles in the Air* (*Les Châteaux en Espagne*). Take the beginning and end of one of his soliloquies from the last-named play, and we shall find that Collin d'Harleville, as well as Picard, was occasionally given to the tendency "to point a moral and adorn a tale" :—

"Each mortal builds his castles in the air,  
In country or in town, no matter where ;  
Asleep, awake, they all the same are made !  
The weary labourer, leaning on his spade,  
Can deem himself the squire of the place ;  
Age can in thought the frosts of time efface. . .  
The clerk a minister, the priest "my lord"  
Becomes—The bishop. . . . In a word,  
In dreams, no fate can with my own compare ;  
Only believe you're happy, and you are."<sup>1</sup>

The stage of the Empire had many other dramatists to draw upon. Lemierre,<sup>2</sup> of the old school, wrote several tragedies, of which *Hypermnestra* and the *Widow of Malabar* are considered the best ; and Florian,<sup>3</sup> better known by his *Fables*, was the author of *Jeannot and Colin*, the best of his comedies ; both died before the Directory. Andrieux,<sup>4</sup> who long survived the Restoration, a journalist and a satirist as well as a dramatist, wrote *Aneximandra*, a lively burlesque which

<sup>1</sup> "Chacun fait des châteaux en Espagne ;  
On en fait à la ville, ainsi qu'à la campagne ;  
On en fait en dormant, on en fait éveillé.  
Le pauvre paysan, sur sa bêche appuyé,  
Peut se croire un moment seigneur de son village ;  
Le vieillard, oublier les glaces de son âge. . . .  
Un commis est ministre ; un jeune abbé prélat ;  
Le prélat. . . . En deux mots,  
Quand je songe, je suis le plus heureux des hommes ;  
Et dès que nous croyons être heureux, nous le sommes."

*Les Châteaux en Espagne*, act iii., sec. 7

<sup>2</sup> 1723-1793.

<sup>3</sup> 1755-1794.

<sup>4</sup> 1759-1833.

met with considerable success, and the *Blunderers* (*Etourdis*), which is still occasionally acted. Etienne,<sup>1</sup> who wrote a favourite piece called the *Two Sons-in-Law*, and Nepomucène Lemer cier,<sup>2</sup> a stickler for the classical fashions, exhaust the list of those whom it is worth our while to notice. Lemer cier, a fertile writer, with whom we have already made acquaintance as the author of *Pinto* and *Plautus*, boasted that he was the creator of historical comedy, and added in this style *Christopher Columbus* (1809) and *Richelieu* (1828), the latter being his latest work. He wrote also a number of tragedies, classical and historical, of which *Agamemnon*, written when he was only twenty-six years old, is considered the best. In 1810, shortly after having been elected a member of the Academy, he published a somewhat remarkable poem, the *Atlantéid, or the Newtonian Theogony*, in which Oxygen, Caloric, Gravitation, Phosphorus, appear as the divinities of a latter-day theocracy. Nine years later appeared another work, the *Panhypocrisiad, or the Infernal Comedy of the Sixteenth Century*, played, according to the author, before a pit of demons, men and women, in the infernal regions. The prologue consists of a scientific discussion between the Earth and Copernicus. Fiends, princes, princesses, prelates, authors, banditti, warriors, madmen and saints, abstract personifications, Michel-Angelo, Francis the First and Charles the Fifth, are among the personages who defile before the reader in sixteen dreary cantos. But the man was better than the author. Though intimate with Bonaparte he never flattered him, but made him hear what he was already long unaccustomed to hear, the truth. After Napoleon had become emperor (1804), Lemer cier said to him: "You amuse yourselves in making anew the bed of the Bourbons; I tell you that you shall not sleep ten years in it." In 1811, the emperor, before entering upon his Russian cam-

<sup>1</sup> 1778-1845.<sup>2</sup> 1771-1840.

paign, went to a meeting of the Institute, and, seeing the poet, asked him why for a long time he had not written any new plays for the stage. "Because," said Lemer cier quietly, "I am waiting !" As soon as the Empire was declared, he also sent back the order of the Legion of Honour, of which he was a member.

Almost the only lyric poet worthy of mention amongst the literary men of the first Empire was Ecouchard Lebrun ;<sup>1</sup> and of course the bulk of the work of an author who was seventy years of age at the beginning of the present century virtually belongs to the earlier epoch. Nevertheless, Lebrun was a man who identified himself with the spirit of each age through which he passed, and his six hundred epigrams extend pretty evenly over the events of more than half a century. He had great energy of conception and execution, and though he wrote much he laboured over his poems with almost painful minuteness. The consequence is that his portraits stand out clearly from his pages, like medallions that exhibit all the protracted industry of the engraver. His six books of odes, four books of elegies, two books of epistles, and the epigrams aforesaid, contain nothing that is not in some sense striking ; and if the phrases strike more than the ideas, at least they produce a sensation of genuine pleasure. The finish of his language, and his fondness for classical names, may be judged by the following extract, which in the translation loses part of the bloom and flavour of the original :—

" A treacherous ship lies on the seas,  
Wherein the stern Eumenides  
A dread conspiracy contrive.  
I hear the victim's piteous shriek,  
Whom blood-stained hands of murder seek  
To cast into the deep alive.

<sup>1</sup> 1729-1807.

Your rage, ye greedy pirates stay !  
 Fierce men, your barbarous clutch delay !  
 It is Arion mercy craves,  
 Stop, to his magic harp give heed.  
 He sings, and to protect his need  
 A dolphin cleaves the liquid waves.

He sings ; his harp's enraptured sound,  
 Of blades that glitter all around,  
 Charms off each meditated blow ;  
 The monster, 'neath the bard divine,  
 Submiss doth his huge bulk incline,  
 Soon as he reached the waves below ;

And, as a chariot speeds along  
 By coursers guided fleet and strong,  
 Bears him o'er ocean's boundless plain  
 From watery depths of cave and rock,  
 Arion sees the Nereids flock  
 In crowds, to listen to his strains.

O, wondrous power of song to soothe !  
 The stormy waves are still and smooth,  
 The skies regain their smiling hue,  
 Soft calm the furious North enchains,  
 And Nereus' watery palace gains,  
 A splendour of celestial blue.

Arion, banish doubt and fear,  
 Now the Corinthian coast you near,  
 By noble Periander owned.  
 Minerva loves these shores of old ;  
 And there a sage your eyes behold,  
 Upon a monarch's seat enthroned."

" Quel est ce navire perfide  
 Où l'impitoyable kamonide  
 A soufflé d'horribles complots ?  
 J'entends les cris d'une victime  
 Que la main sanglante du crime  
 Va précipiter dans les flots.

Arrêtez, pirates avides !  
 Durs nochers, que vos mains barbares  
 D'Arion respectent les jours !  
 Arrêtez ! écoutez sa lyre :  
 Il chante ! et du liquide empire  
 Un dauphin vole à son secours.



Il chante ! et sa lyre fidèle  
Du glaive qui brille autour d'elle  
Charme les coups impétueux,  
Tandis que le monstre en silence  
Sous le demi-dieu qui s'élance  
Courbe son flanc respectueux.

Le voilà, tel qu'un char docile,  
Qui l'emporte d'un cours agile  
Sur la plaine immense des mers !  
Et du fond des grottes humides,  
Arion voit les Néréides  
Courir en foule à ses concerts.

O merveilles de l'harmonie !  
L'onde orageuse est aplanie,  
Le ciel devient riant et pur,  
Un doux calme enchaîne Borée,  
Les palais flottants de Nérée  
Brillent d'un immobile azur.

Jeune Arion, bannis la crainte ;  
Aborde aux rives de Corinthe :  
Périandre est digne de toi.  
Minerve aime ce doux rivage ;  
Et tes yeux y verront un sage  
Assis sur le trône d'un roi."

## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. REVIVAL OF THE POETICAL AND RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT.

COUNT DE MAISTRE and La Harpe had many companions in the contest which they waged, from 1794 downwards, against the philosophical and political ideas of the Revolution ; and though the reaction was for a moment checked by the *coup d'état* of October 1795, it declared itself again with increased energy a few months later. In no form was this return to the old ideas more distinctly championed than in the journals founded towards the close of the last century. La Harpe, Fontanes, Michaud, Lacroix, and others, writing in the *Gazette Française*, in the *Quotidien*, in the *Mémorial*, fought manfully against the powerful writers whose confidence in the new order of things had not been shaken by the excesses of the Terror—against Chénier, Garat, Roederer, Benjamin Constant, writing in the *Conservateur*, the *Clef du Cabinet*, the *Journal de Paris*. The struggle was a long and bitter one, and it is not yet fought out. But it was a struggle which would not be confined to the newspapers. The more solid and deliberate literature of the Consulate and the Empire bears witness to its existence in other quarters, and to its effects upon individual minds ; and no one so well displays the revival of the religious sentiment as the author of the *Genius of Christianity*, a work which had a remarkable effect on public opinion in France, from the moment of its first appearance in 1802.

François Auguste, Viscount de Chateaubriand,<sup>1</sup> was born

<sup>1</sup> 1768-1848. Some of his biographers call him François-René.

at Saint-Malo, of an ancient Breton stock. His childhood was spent in his father's solitary castle at Combourg, where he received an education rather wide than profound, and, scarcely of age, he was sent on a visit to America and Canada. He returned to France in time to find the king in prison, and the nobility hurrying from their native land. Following the example of so many of his order, he fled to England; and there, after a few years of retirement, he printed his first work, an *Essay on Revolutions, Historical, Political, and Moral*. When Napoleon had subordinated all political and social interests to the single idea of foreign conquest, Chateaubriand re-entered France. In 1801 he published his romance of *Atala*; the following year saw the *Genius of Christianity*, and *René* appeared in 1805.<sup>1</sup> A voyage to the Holy Land followed, and from there he brought back a book on the *Martyrs* and an *Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem*, both published in 1809. From romance, religion, and travel, our versatile author turned his attentions to politics, history, and mysticism. After some years spent in the political arena, from the date of the Restoration to the Revolution of 1830—a period during which he published hardly anything but political pamphlets, of which the one on *Bonaparte and the Bourbons* (1814) is the most virulent—Chateaubriand issued, in 1831, a volume of *Historical Studies*. This was succeeded in 1836 by an *Essay on English Literature*; in 1837 by a literal translation in prose of *Paradise Lost*, and in 1844 by the *Life of Rancé*. His *Memoirs from beyond the Tomb* appeared only after his death. In verse, Chateaubriand has left a tragedy, *Moses*, and a few minor poems.

Champion of Christianity as he was, Chateaubriand was by no means a man of settled religious convictions, or even of consistent faith in the principles laid down in the work which

<sup>1</sup> See about *René*, bk. viii. ch. iii. § i. p. 262.

is most commonly associated with his name. That he was popular and influential in his day we cannot doubt ; and perhaps the opinion expressed of him by M. Guizot, in his essay on *Cornuille and his Time*, will suffice to explain the cause. "Read over again," says that acute observer of men and things, "the *Essay on Revolution*, *René*, and the *Memoirs from beyond the Tomb*, those three monuments wherein M. de Chateaubriand, young, mature, and old, has painted himself with so much complacency ; is there one of his dispositions or moral weaknesses that cannot there be discovered ? Our hopes so measureless, our disgusts so ready, our trials so variable, our ardours, our perpetual failures and regenerations, our alternative ambitions and susceptibilities, our returns to faith from relapses into doubt, that activity at once inexhaustible and uncertain, that mixture of noble passions and of selfishness, that fluctuation between the past and the future, all those changeable and ill-assorted features which have characterised amongst us, for half a century, the condition of society and of the human soul, M. de Chateaubriand also carried with him ; and his works, like his life, everywhere display their influence and their image." If this be true, it follows that the *Genius of Christianity*, like any other of its author's controversial works, must be regarded rather in relation to a phase of human thought than as the expression of an individual mind ; for the man, such as M. Guizot describes him, is, at any given moment, but a medium between the past and the future of his generation ; capable both of receiving and of giving impressions, but under the necessity of receiving before he gives. For the rest, Chateaubriand's style is vigorous, bright, crowded with images. His pictures tell, though a critic might say that the colouring is overdone ; he has weight, but it is rather by grouping and detail than by originality of conception. Another French critic,<sup>1</sup> hostile

<sup>1</sup> Michelet, *Histoire du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, "Jusqu'à Waterloo," bk. i., ch. 9.



to Chateaubriand, says of *Atala*, *René*, and the *Genius of Christianity*, "Chateaubriand, a skilful swimmer, knew always to go with the rising sea, and to be carried by the mounting tide and waves (sometimes by the church, sometimes by royalism and the Restoration). . . . He understood that, in Paris, it is necessary, before all, to produce an effect by surprising people . . . and, the better to attract the notice of the passers-by, he threw himself out of the window. . . . I mean he wrote *Atala*, a little novel, in which the author, who at first had thought of the charming book *Paul and Virginia*, in order to draw the attention, created a language for himself, neither French nor Lower-Breton. This produced some effect, and every one, laughing, listened, and said, 'That is new!' Or, 'What does it all mean?' The prodigious ridiculousness of this production would have stifled any other author. But in it we find a *conversion*; the young savage in love dies a Christian. This made the book survive amongst a certain public, apparently very patient. . . . The *Beauties of Religion*, a profane title, which a true believer would never have employed, and to which was added, which is scarcely better, *Genius of Christianity*, sold so well that it was found profitable to swell it out more and more. To the sacraments, ceremonies, festivals, bells, were added the church, the monks, the missionaries, the mendicant-orders, the Jesuits, etc. This encyclopædia of a dead thing, decked out with recollections, but henceforth barren, was not without attractions for many men, in whom it was connected with the impressions of childhood. But it had not a great influence. . . . It had a literary success, and that was all. . . . Weariness is so much master during that time, that Chateaubriand, who just now took upon himself to console us by the charms of old recollections, acknowledges himself that his religion, evoked in the *Genius of Christianity*, has neither calmed nor consoled him. Hence *René*, that confession of desperate melancholy,—although an unnatural passion, of which a glimpse is caught,

assists and mixes with piety a slight taste of incest—a singular episode which one is astonished to find in the midst of this Christian encyclopædia.”

Chateaubriand, by birth and breeding a man of the *ancien régime*, by riper training and conviction an adherent of the new philosophy, even to the extent of the virtual repudiation of Christianity which marked the intellectual movement under Voltaire and Rousseau, was said to be reconverted to the profession of his earlier creed by the prayers of his mother upon her death-bed. The need of his country once felt, the idea of what he looked upon as a remedy once conceived, he threw himself with enthusiasm into his task. A hundred others might have done it. The work should have commended itself to every one of the thousands of priests who fled before the guillotine, and who might have atoned abroad for the desertion of their posts at home. But few could have raised the standard so well as Chateaubriand, or could have proclaimed the watchword of religion with so much *verve*, so much eloquence and persuasion, so much poetry and philosophy. It was not mere declamation, or the mere reassertion of dogma, that could have hit the mood of France at that particular crisis. The philosophy of the eighteenth century was not obliterated; it was scarcely even discredited. Terrorism, blank atheism, the doctrine of blood, the conversion of the Deity into an article of a code—these things were disbelieved and disclaimed by the bulk of the nation; and it was in the place of these that Chateaubriand's discursive and ornate apology for Christianity was received with general acclamation.

The *Genius of Christianity* has four divisions. In the first the author passes in review the leading dogmas of the Christian faith, such as had been accepted for eighteen centuries without controversy. The next two parts, which comprise the gist of the work as it presented itself to its first readers, and as it has been estimated by succeeding genera-

tions, deal with the relations between religion on the one hand, and poetry, art, literature, on the other. Herein Chateaubriand has full scope for his best talents, and exhausts upon his theme all the ardour of an imaginative mind, a lofty genius, and a cultivated literary taste ; so that there is no comparison between the attractiveness of these two parts and that of the remainder. The last division deals with the ceremonies and institutions of the Christian Church—with the theory and practice of Christian worship. From this fourfold, or rather threefold division of his subject, Chateaubriand deduces three arguments or grounds of persuasion, whereby he seeks to attract his readers back again to the faith of their forefathers. The genius of Christianity, he says, which France had hastily made up her mind to despise and ignore, is manifested first in its doctrines and mysteries, which contain all that can convince the mind and satisfy the natural yearnings of the heart—which can be said of no other form of faith ; secondly, in the enjoyments which it has afforded to the mind of man ; and thirdly, in the services and benefits which it has rendered to humanity in every age.

The conclusion alone was striking ; it was forcibly put ; and its *prima facie* truth was sufficient to carry it home to the hearts of those already disposed to accept it, with all the force of an intuition. To this general predisposition of the public mind we must attribute, more even than to the eloquence and persuasiveness of the author, the enthusiasm with which his work was received. De Fontanes, who had been on intimate terms with Chateaubriand in England, where the *Genius of Christianity* was written, prepared the way both for the return of his friend to France, and for the appearance of his ambitious work. He felt the pulse of the public through the papers with which he was connected, and gave extracts from the book in the *Mercure*. When it was finally issued from the press, the welcome given to it was

great and immediate. Chateaubriand tells us in his *Memoirs*: "I became fashionable. My head was turned. I knew nothing of the pleasures of celebrity; I was intoxicated by them." La Harpe, the Fontenelle of his generation, at once sought out the author, and proclaimed his merits aloud. "This is criticism," he said, "this is literature. Ah, *messieurs les philosophes*, you have got more than you can manage here!" Bonaparte himself, who had just signed his Concordate with the Pope, and had restored the churches to the clergy, naturally hailed so stout an ally in his attempt to rebuild the national religion.<sup>1</sup>

Nine years later the Minister of the Interior, M. de Montalivet, it is said at the suggestion of Napoleon, invited the Institute to consider the merits of Chateaubriand's work; and the response to this appeal reminds one of nothing so much as the infant Academy's criticism of the *Cid*. The Institute was still imbued, in 1811, with the philosophical ideas of 1789. Saint-Jean d'Angely, Morellet, Lemercier, Lacretelle, Arnault, without openly attacking Chateaubriand, treated his book much as it might be treated in some noted caustic and sceptic review of to-day. It is true that a severe criticism could not speak altogether favourable of the *Genius of Christianity*, as regards either its matter or its form; and it may be that these critics in particular were somewhat carried away by their special predilections. Lemercier's opinion was perhaps the most uncompromising, for he speaks of the book as "a work devoid of common sense, a heterogeneous compound of translations from the principal Hebrew poems, illuminated with colours taken from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, which has owed its success to party spirit." That last sneer was scarcely deserved. There is more in Chateaubriand's work than Hebrew poems and Bernardin de Saint-

<sup>1</sup> It was rumoured that Napoleon's brother Lucien had had a hand in the revision of the latter portion of the work.



Pierre ; and as to its success, we must remember that the "party spirit" to which this was due was the spirit of a party which for the time being comprised a great part of the bulk of French society. As for ourselves, we can consider the *Genius of Christianity* both from within and from without the Institute ; and we shall doubtless admit that its value as a literary work is not to be compared with its value as having contributed to a certain necessary and wholesome reaction in the public mind. Let the reader judge for himself by the following extract :—

"It is time<sup>1</sup> that we should know at last the true value of such reproaches as *absurdity*, *coarseness*, and *narrowness*, which are made every day to Christianity ; it is time to show that, far from dwarfing the thought, it wonderfully lends itself to the raptures of the soul, and can exalt the mind as divinely as the gods of Virgil and Homer. . . . We dare to believe that this way of looking at Christianity offers some evidences, little known ; sublime through the antiquity of its recollections, which go as far as the cradle of the world, ineffable in its mysteries, adorable in its sacraments, interesting in its history, heavenly in its morality, rich and charming in its pomp, it claims all kinds of pictures. Do you wish to follow it in poetry ? Tasso, Milton, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, will depict to you its miracles. In literature, eloquence, history, philosophy ? What have Bossuet, Fénelon, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Bacon, Pascal, Euler, Newton, Leibnitz, not done, through its inspiration ? In arts ? what masterpieces ! If you examine it in its worship, of how many things do its old Gothic churches, and its admirable prayers, and its superb ceremonies, not speak to you ? Amongst its clergy ? Behold all these men who have transmitted to you the language and the works of Rome and Greece, all these hermits from the desert, all these refuges for the unfortunate, all these missionaries in China, Canada, Paraguay, without forgetting the military Orders whence chivalry will spring ! Manners of our ancestors, picture of ancient days, poetry, even novels, secret affairs of life, we have made everything serve our cause. We ask for laughter

<sup>1</sup> *Génie du Christianisme*, part 1, bk. i. ch. 1.

from the cradle, and for tears from the tomb: sometimes, with the Maronite monk, we dwell on the summits of Mount Carmel and Lebanon; sometimes, with a sister of charity, we watch at the bed of a patient: here an American couple call to us from the bottom of their deserts; there we hear the maiden lament in the solitudes of the cloister: Homer takes his place near Milton, Virgil beside Tasso: the ruins of Memphis and Athens contrast with the ruins of Christian monuments, the tombs of Ossian with our country cemeteries; at Saint-Denis we visit the ashes of our kings; and, when our subject compels us to speak of the dogma of the existence of God, we only look for our proofs in the marvels of nature; in short, we endeavour to move the heart of the sceptic in all ways; but we dare not flatter ourselves that we possess this miraculous rod of religion, which makes living waters to leap forth from the rock."<sup>1</sup>

The *Genius of Christianity* is, in reality, the book on which Chateaubriand's reputation chiefly rests; *The Martyrs*,

<sup>1</sup> "Il est temps qu'on sache enfin à quoi se réduisent ces reproches d'absurdité, de grossièreté, de petitesse qu'on fait tous les jours au christianisme; il est temps de montrer que, loin de rapetisser la pensée, il se prête merveilleusement aux élans de l'âme, et peut enchanter l'esprit aussi divinement que les dieux de Virgile et d'Homère: Nous osons croire que cette manière d'envisager le christianisme présente des rapports peu connus: sublime par l'antiquité de ses souvenirs qui remontent au berceau du monde, ineffable dans ses mystères, adorable dans ses sacrements, intéressant dans son histoire, céleste dans sa morale, riche et charmant dans ses pompes, il résume toutes les sortes de tableaux. Venez vous le suivre dans la poésie? le Tasse, Milton, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire vous retracent ses miracles. Dans les belles-lettres, l'éloquence, l'histoire, la philosophie? que n'ont point fait, par son inspiration, Bossuet, Fénelon, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Racine, Pascal, Euler, Newton, Leibnitz! Dans les arts? que de chefs-d'œuvre! Si vous l'examinez dans son culte, que de choses ne vous disent point et ses vieilles églises gothiques, et ses prières admirables, et ses superbes cérémonies! Parmi son clergé? voyez tous ces hommes qui vous ont transmis la langue et les ouvrages de Rome et de la Grèce, tous ces solitaires de la Thébaine, tous ces lieux de refuge pour les infortunés, tous ces missionnaires à la Chine, au Canada, au Paraguay, sans oublier les Ordres militaires, d'où va naître la chevalerie! Mœurs de nos aïeux, peinture des anciens jours, peuples, costumes même, choses secrètes de la vie, nous avons tous fait servir à notre cause. Nous demandons des rires au berceau, et des pleurs à la tombe. Tantôt avec le moine Maronite, nous habitons les sommets du Carmel et du Liban; tantôt avec la fille de la Charité, nous veillons au lit du malade; ici deux époux Américains nous appellent au fond de leurs deserts, là nous entraînons pour la vierge dans les solitudes du cloître: Homère vient se placer auprès de

a sketch of Christianity at the time of Constantine, is from a historical and poetical view a failure, but the glamour of style throws a certain kind of charm over the descriptions of imperial Rome, of the catacombs, and of the monks in the desert, and over the chaste love of Cymodocée and the prophetic madness of Velléda. The *Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem* is correct but cold ; his *Natchez* is incoherent, and its final catastrophe is revolting in its atrocity ; his *Historical Studies, or Discourses on the Fall of the Roman Empire* are full of antitheses, and bear ample proofs of an imagination which often carries the author beyond the realms of the historian. In his *Essays on English Literature* and in his translation of *Paradise Lost* he appears not to have sufficiently understood the subjects about which he wrote, as it seems to me, without any regard to the genius of the French language.<sup>1</sup> In his *Memoirs*

Milton, Virgile à côté du Tasse : les ruines de Memphis et d'Athènes contrastent avec les ruines des monument chrétiens, les tombeaux d'Ossian avec nos cimetières de campagne ; à Saint-Denis nous visitons la cendre des rois ; et, quand notre sujet nous force de parler du dogme de l'existence de Dieu, nous cherchons seulement nos preuves dans les merveilles de la nature ; enfin nous essayons de frapper au cœur de l'incrédule de toutes les manières ; mais nous n'osons nous flatter de posséder cette verge miraculeuse de la religion, qui fait jaillir du rocher les sources d'eau vive."

<sup>1</sup> Let one example suffice, taken from the Seventh Book of *Paradise Lost*—

"Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound

Within the visible diurnal sphere ;  
Standing on earth, not rapt above  
the pole,

More safe I sing with mortal voice,  
unchang'd

To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on  
evil days,

On evil days though fall'n, and evil  
tongues ;

In darkness, and with dangers compass'd round,

And solitude ; yet not alone, while  
thou

Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or  
when morn

Purples the east."—Verses 21-30.

"La moitié de mon sujet reste encore à chanter, mais dans les bornes plus étroites de la sphère diurne et visible. Arrêté sur la terre, non ravi au-dessus du pôle, je chanterai plus sûrement d'une voix mortelle ; elle n'est devenue ni enrouée ni muette, quoique je sois tombé dans de mauvais jours, dans de mauvais jours quoique je sois tombé, parmi des langues mauvaises, parmi les ténèbres et la solitude, et entouré de périls. Cependant je ne suis pas seul, lorsque la nuit tu visites mes sommeils, ou lorsque le matin empourpre l'orient."

from beyond the Tomb Chateaubriand shows no doubt a certain amount of talent and perspicacity of observation, but also a great deal of pride and egotism, which was all the more bitterly felt because it offended the pride and egotism of others. His political opinions may be summed up in his own words :<sup>1</sup> "I am a partisan of the Bourbons through honour, a royalist through reason and conviction, a republican by taste and by character."

## § 2. A LADY-AUTHOR UNDER THE EMPIRE.

The Empire had its exiles as well as the Republic ; and if London knew Chateaubriand in 1796, it knew Madame de Staël in 1813. Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker,<sup>2</sup> daughter of the celebrated minister, was born and educated in Paris, and was what is known as a precocious child. Her first work was published in her twenty-second year, and its title, *Letters concerning Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, sufficiently indicates the nature of the influence under which her earliest social and literary ideas were formed. She had married, two years before, Eric-Magnus, baron of Staël Holstein. At the outbreak of the Revolution her political pamphlets upon the situation earned for her a high repute both in France and England. In 1796 she published a treatise on the *Influence of the Passions on the Welfare of Individuals and Nations*, and five years later one on *Literature considered in its Relations with Social Institutions*. The most celebrated of her works, *Delphine* and *Corinne*, novels, and *On Germany*, appeared between 1802 and 1814. A memoir of her father, *The Last Opinions on Finance and Politics of M. Necker*, and in which she was sus-

<sup>1</sup> In *De la Restauration et de la Monarchie effective*, published in 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 1766-1817.



pected of having assisted, gave great umbrage to the First Consul. She was ordered to leave France, concealed herself for some time in the country, but finally received notice to quit within twenty-four hours, and went to Germany. At the death of her father (1804) she returned to Switzerland, remained there one year, went then to Italy, and afterwards lived for some time, in retirement, about twelve miles from Paris. But the success of *Corinne*, which is said to have been criticised severely in the *Moniteur* by Napoleon himself, made her leave France anew, by order of the police. In 1809 she came back secretly to superintend the printing of her book *On Germany*. The entire edition was seized, and she herself commanded to leave the country, whilst the Viscount de Montmorency and Madame Récamier were also exiled for having given her shelter. The jealousy of foreign nations was at its height throughout the Empire; and the minister of police, Savary, wrote a long letter to Madame de Staël, in which the following expressions occur:—"It has appeared to me that the air of this country does not agree with you, and we are not reduced to seek for models in the people whom you admire. Your last work is not French." Her residence in Coppet, in Switzerland, became unbearable, on account of the continuous interference of the French police; and she went from there to Vienna, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, and finally to London, to escape from the spies of Napoleon. Her *Ten Years of Exile* were published after her death.

The style of Madame de Staël is peculiarly attractive. Entirely apart from the fact that she is a woman, it is impossible not to be struck by the warmth of her imagination, her copiousness of phrase, her ease, readiness in description and suggestion, her large views on the moral or social questions which she touches. As a critic, especially of subjects and objects relating to the varied aspects of nature and art, she holds her own with the best of her contemporaries, and a

strong element of human interest runs through all that she has written. In her work upon *Germany*, which was only published in London in 1814, these faculties are perhaps better exemplified than in any other. She had been thrice across the Rhine, first in 1803, and again in 1807 and 1808. Readily impressible, an acute observer, and a spirited commentator on all that she observed, it was but natural that these voyages should have inspired her with thoughts worthy of a lasting expression. After the fall of the Empire the public could appreciate that which offended the Emperor and his ministers. Frenchmen knew little of the recent ideas and literary productions of their neighbours : they had barely seen the works of Goethe and Schiller, of Klopstock and Gessner ; and Madame de Staël's remarks were received with zest. The Germans themselves were pleased and flattered by this recognition of their best points, and the authoress came to be commonly known amongst them as the *Gute Frau*. From that moment, if not from an earlier date, Madame de Staël maintained relations of friendship with the authors of *Faust* and *Wallenstein*, with Humboldt, Schlegel, Wieland, and many other eminent men across the Rhine.

"That which she feels," Fontanes said of Madame de Staël, "is always more true than that which she thinks." The criticism is severe, but for the most part just. She is at her best in all that touches the imagination ; and as Germany, at that time, especially in its literary aspect, was nothing if not imaginative, it is no matter of surprise that this volume of personal criticism was her masterpiece. Her tendency towards the romantic was always conspicuous in her writings ; and the manner in which she appreciated and discussed the romanticism of the Germans, indicated, as it tended to bring about, a sort of romantic revival in France. In the course of the work which we are now considering she has occasion to speak expressly of this tendency. "The term

romantic," she says, "has been recently introduced into Germany, in order to describe poetry whereof the songs of the troubadours were the origin : that which was born of chivalry and Christianity. If we do not admit that paganism and Christianity, the North and the South, antiquity and the middle ages, chivalry and the Greek and Roman institutions, have divided the empire of literature, we shall never be able to judge, from a philosophical point of view, the ancient and the modern taste."<sup>1</sup>

The general plan of the book is systematic ; and so far as its literary views are concerned, it is rather philosophic than general. After the poets of the land in which she had sojourned, no men of letters attracted her more strongly than Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Herder, Jacobi. If she had not personally met all the German philosophers of the modern schools of thought, she had met men and women capable of discussing their theories and repeating their maxims. If she had not read all their severe and difficult works, she had read German criticisms, commentaries, journals, and correspondence, which had sufficiently instructed her to make her an able and interesting exponent of German ideas to French readers. It was almost a new intellectual world which Madame de Staël at this time opened up before her fellow-countrymen ; and it was for them a pleasant initiation into a novel study, which served thereafter to make the labours of Cousin all the more easy and successful. *Delphine* is a novel in which a description of the happiness to be realised in marriage only, and the danger of an illegitimate union, are described, and in which Madame de Staël depicts herself ; whilst *Corinne* is the portrait of a woman of genius and full of sensibility, and an idealised delineation of the author. These novels contain many pictures of men, women, and sites, which would perhaps have been all the more effective if they had been written in a less

<sup>1</sup> De l'Allemagne, *De la poésie classique et de la poésie romantique.*

theatrical style, a style peculiar to not a few of the *littérateurs* of the Empire.<sup>1</sup> But though Madame de Staël did not escape the influences of her time, her heart was not imperial. When it was proposed to her that she should celebrate the birth of the King of Rome, and thus receive permission to return to France, she replied: "All that I can do for him is, to wish that he may get a good nurse."

### § 3. PHILOSOPHY DURING THE EMPIRE.

Amongst the men of the philosophical reaction—the men who, during the first ten or twelve years of the present century revolted against the materialism of the revolutionary philosophy, and oppose with the legitimate weapons of metaphysical science the sensationalism of Condillac and his successors—was Royer-Collard.<sup>2</sup> Descended from an old Jansenist family, he was still young when the Revolution broke out, and he adopted the principles of constitutional progress with the enthusiasm of a well-balanced mind. He had come up to Paris in 1787, in order to pursue his career at the bar, and had studied with that end in view under the famous advocate Gerbier. He joined the Opposition party in the conscientious belief that a representative Chamber and a supreme National Assembly would remedy all the evils under which his country laboured; and from 1789 to 1792 he was a more or less active member of the Commune of Paris. In the latter year he retired before the triumphant violence of the tenth of August; and was consequently not implicated in the deposition and death of the king. On the 31st of May

<sup>1</sup> Michelet in his *Histoire du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, "Jusqu'à Waterloo," bk. i., ch. 9, says: "Madame de Staël, . . . wrote the novel so diffuse of *Delphine*, then in *Constant* the faint personage of Oswald, an indication which turns to spleen."

<sup>2</sup> 1769-1845.



1793, he appeared, as a delegate from his section, before the Convention, in which the Girondins were at that moment supreme, in order to exhort them to take precautions against the threatened violence of the Jacobin party. From that moment he remained an impatient spectator of the violence by which the Republic was daily more and more discredited; and though, after the fall of Robespierre and the promulgation of the new constitution, he was elected as a member of the Five Hundred, he was subsequently expelled from that body as a Royalist. If Royer-Collard was a Royalist at this time, he was so only potentially, and in the most constitutional sense. His predilections were always in favour of moderation; his face was ever set against extremes, whether of lawless violence or of law-protected despotism. Certainly he had no sympathy with those who had deluged Paris in blood. "These men," he said once, referring to the chiefs of the Mountain, "whom we have since transformed into fantastic Titans ordained by Providence, were pure and simple *canaille*."

When Napoleon was organising the Faculty of Letters in Paris, he nominated Royer-Collard to the chair of the history of philosophy (1811). The latter had for some years kept up a correspondence with the legitimate heir to the crown (Louis XVIII.); but when he accepted the Empire—which he did without enthusiasm—he ceased to work for the Restoration. It would be easy to say that Royer-Collard was a trimmer; and he certainly seems to have lived with the same security under Assembly, Convention, Directory, Consulate, Empire, and Constitutional Monarchy. But under the Empire he ceased to be a politician, and gave himself up to philosophical studies. The bent of his mind was towards a rational spiritualism; his masters were Plato, Descartes, Bossuet, Pascal, and Reid. Reid especially pleased him; and it was the belief of Royer-Collard that the Scotch metaphysician had succeeded in controverting the sensationalist views of Locke and Hume,

which, through the interpretation of Condillac, had roused the Frenchman's antipathy. Although Royer-Collard's lectures did not extend beyond the end of the year 1813, which virtually brought the First Empire to a close, his two years and a half sufficed to enable him to give full expression to his ideas, which, sound or unsound, produced a deep impression upon his age. He translated Reid's work into French, and occupied the greater part of his first course in reading the most striking passages to his hearers—amongst whom were Cousin and Jouffroy—using them, as he went along, to controvert the positions of Condillac. "What experience," he asked in his first lesson, "will convince us that sensation is sufficient to fertilise all the domains of intelligence and sentiment? Because it preceded the exercise of our faculties, are these less original, and do they owe nothing to their own energy? Is it sensation which perceives, which recollects, which passes judgment, which reasons and imagines? Is it in sensation that the eternal law of rights and duties is laid down? It prescribes the useful, does it prescribe the beautiful and the honest? Did it inspire this verse, '*Summum crede nefas animum præferre pudori?*'"<sup>1</sup>

These questions justify us in doubting whether Royer-Collard saw the real point at issue between Locke and Reid. Certainly the problem, as he states it here, is not the problem which naturally arises out of the principles enunciated by the founder of the sensational school. And, in fact, whatever may have been the influence of Royer-Collard upon his generation, his views do not manifest the metaphysical strength necessary to cope with the theories of a Locke.

The attitude taken by Royer-Collard naturally pleased the

<sup>1</sup> "Believe it the greatest crime to set disposition above modesty." For Royer-Collard's lectures see *Œuvres Complètes de Thomas Reid*, Paris, 1828 and 1838, published by Jouffroy, wherein will be found an appreciative view of the latter's philosophical position, and which, doubtless, ought to be read before coming to a conclusion on the merits of the master.

Emperor, who rejoiced to think of an Englishman being worsted by a Frenchman in any kind of conflict. One of the professor's lectures had been laid overnight on Napoleon's table by the librarian of the palace ; and the Emperor, having read it, sent for de Talleyrand, and said, "Do you know, *monsieur le grand électeur*, that there has arisen in my university a very weighty philosopher, who may possibly do us great honour, and rid us altogether of the ideologues, by crushing them with argument?" Royer-Collard was not quite so powerful as his patron wished to think him ; but he was, at all events, one of the founders of a philosophical movement which, under the Restoration, was to produce significant results.

Louis-Gabriel-Ambroise, count de Bonald,<sup>1</sup> son of an old officer of the army of Condé, and himself a soldier, was one of the royalist *émigrés* who remained most faithful to the traditions of his youth. When Louis XVI. signed the decree for the civil constitution of the clergy, Bonald resigned the position which he held as president of the local administration of his department, and fled with his children to Heidelberg. Here he set himself to write his political and religious *Theory of Power in the Civil Society*, a book whereof the leading ideas were afterwards embodied in one of greater pretension, *Primitive Legislation*, published in France in 1802. The former work had been seized and condemned by the Directory ; and it is related that when Bonald returned to the capital, he went, under an assumed name, to inquire of the police concerning the actual fate of the copies which had been sent from Constance to Paris. He was taken into a large room which he found strewn with victims of the government's indiscriminating vigilance. A short search enabled him to discover a copy of the *Theory of Power* lying side by side with an obscene book. "Pardieu !" he exclaimed involuntarily, "I am dying in rather bad company." The tolerant officer who accompanied

<sup>1</sup> 1754-1840.

him smiled, and said, "I can understand that the ordeal is too strong for a father, but I promise him to be discreet." The author was permitted to carry the book away with him; and presently afterwards, having sent it to the First Consul, who had sufficient sense to perceive its harmlessness, his old prescription was cancelled. Thenceforth he threw himself into the campaign which Fontanes, La Harpe, and Chateaubriand were waging against the ideas of the Revolution. He had neither the genius nor the power of his intimate friends Chateaubriand and de Maistre; but his *Primitive Legislation* marks a distinct development of the intellectual ideas of France during the earlier years of the century, and deserves to be mentioned on this account alone. The scope of the work is ambitious. "Modern philosophy," says de Bonald in his preface, "confounds in man his mind with his organs; in society, the sovereign with his subjects; in the universe, God Himself with nature; everywhere, cause with effect; and it destroys all order, general and particular, by taking away all real power of the man over himself, of the leaders of states over their subjects, of God over the universe." The generalisation is a bold one, but it leaves room for sufficiently striking developments. The philosophy of subordination was Bonald's central idea; and it is easy to see how thoroughly it was opposed to the conceptions which Voltaire and Rousseau, amongst others, had grafted upon the minds of their fellow-men in the eighteenth century, and which have not yet been cast aside. The fact is that Bonald was too bold, that his generalisation was a little too venturesome, and that his arguments, if carried to their logical conclusion, would destroy all liberty for man, for the state, and for religion.

Let me conclude the present chapter by a mere mention of the name of Joseph Jonbert,<sup>1</sup> a native of Montignac, who, thanks to his friendship with Fontanes, all-powerful under the

<sup>1</sup> 1754-1824.



Empire, was brought up from his professorship at Toulouse to occupy the position of inspector of studies in Paris. He left behind him a volume of *Thoughts, Essays, and Maxims*, of which Sainte-Beuve says that no book better crowns the series commenced by the *Thoughts* of Pascal, and continued by La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, and Vauvenargues.

## CHAPTER III

## § 1. INFLUENCES OF FOREIGN LITERATURE ON THAT OF FRANCE.

IF, in philosophy and in literature generally, the period of the Consulate and the First Empire was, as we have seen reason to conclude, a period of comparative stagnation, the cause of this dearth in the intellectual progress of France is not far to seek. "At the moment when the Revolution broke out," says Jouffroy,<sup>1</sup> "the teaching of Condillac was still too fresh to have betrayed its weaknesses; the storm roused by that event suspended every kind of reflection, and interrupted, so to say, the succession of metaphysical ideas; and when calm was restored at home, such great things succeeded abroad, that it was difficult for the minds most disposed to reflection to detach themselves completely from the spectacle of the majestic struggles of the Empire against Europe. In presence of these mighty events, thought could not concentrate itself energetically; for, ever diverted, it worked with but the half of its forces. Thus the Empire was an epoch of philosophic slumber. Almost everywhere men were satisfied with the ideas of the eighteenth century; the thought of the nineteenth was in a sense adjourned. Moreover the war had suspended all learned communications with other parts of Europe, and foreign ideas could not intervene, as they have since done, to correct, to extend, and to animate our own."

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the *Fragmente of M. Royer-Collard's Lectures* in Jouffroy's *Complete Works of Real*, quoted above.

We have seen what was the result of Madame de Staël's attempt to make her countrymen, under the Empire, better acquainted with the intellectual condition of Germany. The jealousy of Napoleon and his ministers was not satisfied even with the exile of those who ventured to appreciate the virtues of foreigners; it extended, as we have seen, even to the exile's friends. Nevertheless it was chiefly through the efforts of Madame de Staël, and in continuation of the interest exerted by her work, that France came under the influence of German ideas, at the very moment when the soil of France was partially occupied by German troops.

If it was through a Frenchwoman that the new Germany was made familiar to the new France, an Englishman was destined to be himself one of the first channels of a remarkable stream of English influence upon modern French literature. It is true that Ducis had familiarised his countrymen with Shakspeare, even before 1789; true also that the invectives of Burke had made themselves heard and felt in Paris during the Revolution; but the Paris of the Empire had little or no communication of thought with the England of her day. The *émigrés* had friends at home, and some of them, repudiating the Empire as they had detested the Republic, still corresponded with the capital. But nothing of this kind was open or general; the intercourse was that of individuals, and to the public at large the intellectual activity of England was under a ban. When the treaty of Vienna brought the long European war to a close, the cultivated minds of the two countries approached each other with an eagerness which their recent enmities on the battlefield did little to check. "There were in this almost inevitable tendency," as a French writer points out,<sup>1</sup> "certain grave inconveniences: the ideal of

<sup>1</sup> Nettement, *Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration*, vol. i. p. 229. I am greatly indebted to this work for what I have said about the literary history of the Restoration.

France was thenceforth in England. The most active minds (of the former country) found themselves almost fatally driven to seek, in a more thorough imitation, in a more absolute conformity with the political ideas of England, a resource against the difficulties which they encountered. It was, therefore, in the circumstances rather than in the desire of men that the germ of a new revolution was discovered. Ideas, like plants, have their vegetation as well as their growth; the mark of 1688 was inscribed on the idea of the importation of a constitution after the English fashion. This favour accorded to English ideas served naturally to prepare the way for the influence of English literature." In point of fact, men like Villemain, Guizot, and Cousin, were already doing much to create and encourage this influence; and from the year 1814, the gradual reconciliation of the two countries tended to naturalise in France the most eminent of English men of letters.

The staple of the literary commerce was romance; nothing that either Germany or England could contribute served better to satisfy the sharpened appetite of their neighbours than the works of their poets and writers of fiction. Two Englishmen in particular, Scott and Byron, rose high in the favour of Frenchmen, as soon as their works had been translated and their lives had been made familiar in France. The historical novels of Sir Walter Scott took a strong hold on the imagination of his new readers. The majority of them were at once translated; the style was caught up and imitated. Moore's *Loves of the Angels*, and other English works of the same epoch, found many admirers among the children of the generation which had delighted in Rousseau and the younger Cr billon. But it was to Lord Byron more than to any other that the literary Anglomania of the Restoration was due; and it was his life as much as his works which produced so deep an impression in France. Something not



unlike the life of Byron had already been traced by a French hand. The *René* of Chateaubriand, drawn to a certain extent from his own personal characteristics, was in many respects a faithful type of the age ; full of aspirations and of disillusion, unstable and discontented ; avid of pleasure, yet always finding weariness in fruition ; melancholy, sardonic, and ever burning for notoriety. It was this and more which his contemporaries saw in the young and noble poet who seemed to belong rather to Europe than to England, and who himself had little of insularity in his character. *Childe Harold* was a revelation to Frenchmen ; and of the few who could thoroughly appreciate it, it is no exaggeration to say that they valued it more highly than the bulk of Byron's fellow-countrymen. *Lara*, *Manfred*, *The Giaour*, one by one exerted their sway over minds which had been long accustomed to extraordinary emotions, and whom the fall of Bonaparte had left a prey to comparative monotony and mediocrity. Moreover, the Englishman's pantheism was precisely the kind of religion which suited an epoch in which atheism had become discredited, and orthodoxy was an impossibility.

A new era of French literature may fairly be said to begin with the year 1815. The stage whereon the national drama was henceforth to be played had been rebuilt. The church was restored ; the pope and orthodoxy were once more on their pedestals. Legitimate monarchy was re-established ; though it were but by foreign bayonets, Louis XVIII. sat upon the throne. Philosophy was the scene of a struggle between the old ideas, strong and discredited, and the new ideas, weak but protected. The pride of nationality, late raised to an excess of ardour, more recently wounded to the quick, was still potent in its ill-regulated strength. Cosmopolitanism, after being for a period oppressed and almost destroyed, had received an access of energy which was destined to produce an effect altogether wholesome upon the

literature of modern France. Nor were the actors unworthy of such a stage and of such a crisis. Amongst the older men, de Maistre, Bonald, Chateaubriand, Frayssinous,<sup>1</sup> Royer-Collard, still bore an active part in the intellectual struggle of the nation. Amongst the men who had barely reached their prime, Guizot, Cousin, Odilon-Barrot, Lamennais, Lamartine, Béranger, and others, were giving ample proof of their descent from the giants of the eighteenth century. Thiers, Michelet, Victor Hugo, Mignet were born; and it was under the Restoration that the earliest flights of their genius were to be attempted.

## § 2. THE PERIODICAL PRESS.

If we would comprehend the spirit of the literature of the Restoration, we shall do well to seek our illustrations first of all in the periodical press; for it is here that the leading minds of the epoch are to be found in greatest approximation and in most striking contrast. "Speech and pen," it has been well said,<sup>2</sup> "governed France: every one stretched out his hand towards this intellectual sceptre. Not a single man of note could be mentioned who was not more or less a journalist. Chateaubriand, Bonald, Lamennais, Frayssinous, the cardinal de la Luzerne, the duke de Fitz-James, the duke de Lévis, M. de Villèle, M. de Corbière, M. de Castellajac, M. de Kergorlay, M. de Freilly, MM. de Conny, de la Rochefoucauld, O'Mahony, Agier, de Bouville, d'Herbouville, employed the press to defend or propagate their ideas, as MM. Royer-Collard, Guizot, the duke de Broglie, de Barante, Villenain, Cousin, Kératry, and the whole youthful school which, marching in their steps, was to reach the front in the suc-

<sup>1</sup> 1765-1841.

<sup>2</sup> *Notamment, ibid.*, vol. i. p. 357.

ceeding stage ; MM. Duchâtel, Vitet, de Rémusat, Duvergier de Hauranne, Jouffroy, Dubois, Cavé ; and, in a more decided shade of opinion, Casimir Périer, Laffitte, the general Foy ; Benjamin Constant, Laborde, the marquis de Chauvelin, MM. Comte, Dunoyer, Thiers, Mignet, Carrel. King Louis XVIII. himself did not disdain to developé his royal opinions in articles secretly sent to the newspapers."

It was now that the press acquired its proud title of "The Fourth Estate ;" and, both in France and in England it richly deserved the name. It is difficult to imagine the effect produced by the newspapers of the Restoration, and though the articles were anonymous, and therefore had a natural tendency to reduce even the highest efforts of some of the contributors to the same dead level, such and such an article in the *Minerve*, the *Journal des Débats*, the *Conservateur*, the *Globe*, was, day after day, the talk of Paris, and the powerful instrument of political and social development. It was a race of intellectual progress between journals and journalists. Satire and invective were the weapons which told most forcibly in the struggle for the pre-eminence of ideas ; and it was especially in the *National*, a liberal journal started towards the end of the Restoration, that these weapons attained their greatest power. The *Conservateur* was the special organ of the Catholic monarchical school ; the school of the established monarchy as deriving its right and sanction from the Charter of 1814. Chateaubriand was its principal founder, and in a letter on the occasion of its foundation he says : "Neither I nor my friends will take any interest in a work which is not thoroughly constitutional. We desire the Charter : we believe that the force of the royalists is in the free adoption of representative monarchy."<sup>1</sup> With Chateaubriand were associated the cardinal de la Luzerne, Lamennais,

<sup>1</sup> J. de Maistre wrote to de Bonald : "Do you believe in the Charter ? For my part, I believe in it as much as in the fish remora."

de Bonald ; and their ranks were subsequently reinforced by Lamartine, Villèle, Lévis and Fitz-James, and M. Berryer the younger. The success of the paper was great ; and yet, perhaps not so great as that of the *Globe*, a liberal paper, which had been established in 1824, by MM. Pierre Leroux, de la Chevardière, Dubois, and others. This paper had at once a considerable influence ; and it could hardly have been otherwise in such an age and with such conductors. Amongst the earliest contributors, in addition to those already named, were Patin and Damiron, of the eclectic school ; Farry, afterwards killed in an attack on the Tuilleries, in 1830 ; Ampère, Sainte-Beuve, Vitet, de Rémusat, Duvergier de Hauranne. M. Thiers wrote a series of eight articles on the *Salon* of 1824 ; but the tone of the *Globe*, both in philosophy and in general criticism, was somewhat too far in advance for the historian of the Revolution, who clung to the earlier philosophical views of the eighteenth century. A few years later the *Revue Française* was founded by Guizot, Cousin, Villemain, Barante, and de Broglie, who had also the partial assistance of de Rémusat. The *Revue* was on the same side as the *Globe*, but was less outspoken than its younger and more intrepid contemporary. Of the spirit and qualities of the latter Guizot himself has said, in his *Memoirs in aid of the History of my Time* :<sup>1</sup> "Two faults were associated with these generous tendencies : the ideas developed in the *Globe* lacked a fixed basis and a firm limitation ; their form was more decided than their substructure ; they revealed spirits animated by a grand movement, but which did not advance to a single and certain goal, and accessible to an indifference which gave ground to fear lest they might one day themselves drift upon the rocks to which they drew attention. At the same time the spirit of clique, that disposition to study one's own pleasure in the little circle wherein one lives, and to isolate

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 324.



oneself in indifference from the great public, for whom one works and to whom one speaks, exercised too much sway over the *Globe*.” It was possibly some such suspicion as this, added to the temptation to wield the same power in general politics which had for six years been wielded over literature, which caused the conductors of the *Globe* to open its columns in 1830 to the politics of the day. From that moment the influence of the paper steadily declined ; not, however, before it had done its work.

The newspapers were greatly assisted by pamphlets, and one of the most powerful, and perhaps the ablest, of the pamphleteers of that time was Paul-Louis Courier.<sup>1</sup> A native of Paris, a man of cultivated and scholarly tastes, he became an officer of artillery under Bonaparte, but he withdrew from the army in order to devote himself to literary pursuits, and secured the reputation of a learned classical student. During a sojourn at Rome he had the good fortune to discover an unedited fragment of Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloe*, but by accident Courier spilled some ink on one of its pages ; and he was accused of having done so on purpose. He published a translation of this classical pastoral poem at Florence, and only printed a small number, part of which he sent to the most eminent scholars in Europe. The rest of the edition was seized by order of the Minister of the Interior ; and Courier was accused of having left the army without leave. He writes himself :<sup>2</sup> “ I have two ministers after me, of whom one wishes to have me shot as a deserter ; whilst another wishes to have me hanged for having stolen some Greek. . . . One of them says : ‘ You are a soldier, for you got drunk in the island of Lobau last year with L. and some scamps like him, who called you comrade ; you followed the Emperor on horseback ; so you shall be shot.’ The other says : ‘ You shall be hanged, for you have soiled a page of

<sup>1</sup> 1772-1825.

<sup>2</sup> September 12, 1810.

Greek, to play a trick on some pedants who do not know Greek, nor any other tongue.' Thereupon I bewail my misfortunes and reply: 'Shall I then be shot for having drunk a draught of wine to the health of the emperor? Must I also be hanged for a blot of ink?' " Courier remained in Italy for some years, and on his return produced a translation of Xenophon's treatise on *Cavalry*; and subsequently a version of part of the third book of Herodotus, in French of the sixteenth century. Courier had a taste for the archaic forms of the language, and even his ordinary style bears witness to the manner in which he had steeped his mind in the spirit of the old writers. Under the Restoration he was a pamphleteer of no little force and energy, assisting outside the generous efforts of General Foy and his friends within the Chamber.<sup>1</sup> His familiar correspondence offers a model of wit, grace, and abounding facility of expression; but it is as a pamphleteer that he will always continue to be best known.

Courier was one of those men who are instinctively inclined to be rebels against authority based upon simple privilege, or upon merely accidental or arbitrary power. He had a natural tendency towards an attitude of opposition; and very much the same feeling which caused him to quit the army of the Emperor made him take up a position adverse to Louis XVIII. and his ministers. Personal pique, it may be even the desire of notoriety, contributed to make him the Diogenes of his day, a cynic whom few things could please, and who saw national crimes and oppressions everywhere. In 1819, having failed in his candidature for the seat vacated by Clavier, his father-in-law, in the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, he addressed a caustic brochure to the members; and from that moment he seems to have definitely

<sup>1</sup> It was General Foy (1775-1825), a liberal orator of considerable pretensions, who exclaimed in the heat of debate: "We are but five in the Chamber, but we have all France behind us."

chosen his path. He retired to a cottage on the border of a forest, near Luynes, in Touraine; lived the life of a stoic, if not that of an absolute hermit; and without ever letting the world forget that he had been an officer in the army, and was a man of rank and cultivation, signed all his pamphlets, "Paul-Louis Courier, vine-dresser." From April 1819 to July 1820, he wrote a number of letters to the newspaper *The Censor*, which exhibit for the first time his ripest, quaintest, and most vigorous style; and though his declamations, his invectives, his apostrophes, his moral sayings, are occasionally of the forcible-feeble kind, displaying too much mechanical power for the effect produced, still there are many passages at once lofty and necessary to be spoken; reminiscences of 1789 which were not wholly out of place in 1819. Take, for instance, his familiar similitude of the nation and its rulers—a great and serviceable truth, put sternly and nakedly, and yet with all the clearness and brilliancy of a well-cut stone. "The nation," he says, "will make the government advance, like a coachman whom we have paid, and whose business it is to drive us not where he likes and how he likes, but where we choose to go, and by the road that suits us."

The two best of his pamphlets—I mean the two which show him at his bitterest and most forcible, and which aroused the greatest sensation—were, *The Simple Discourse of Paul-Louis, Vine-Dresser of la Chavonnière, to the Councillors of the Commune of Veretz, on the occasion of a Subscription proposed by his Excellency the Minister of the Interior for the Acquisition of Chambord*, and *The Pamphlet of Pamphlets*. The title of this former pamphlet, issued in 1821, explains its subject: the Castle of Chambord was to be purchased by public subscription, and presented to the young duke of Bordeaux. Thereupon the democratic ire of Paul-Louis was roused, and he poured forth a long unsavoury stream of

reminiscences and insinuations on the subject of that ancient abode of royalty. But before he does so he begins in the following simple and natural way :—

“ If we had money enough not to know what to do with it, if all our debts were paid, our roads repaired, our poor relieved, our church first (for God goes before everything) paved, newly-roofed, and glazed ; if we had still left some sum which could be spent out of the parish, I believe, my friends, that we ought to contribute, with our neighbours, to build the new bridge of Saint-Avertin, which, shortening by a good league the way from here to Tours, would, by the quick sale of our provisions, increase the price and the produce of the lands in the whole neighbourhood ; that is, I believe, the best use to which we could put the money we do not want, when we have any. But to buy Chambord for the duke of Bordeaux.—I am not of that opinion, and should not wish it, even if we had the needful ; for, according to me, the affair is bad for him, for us, and for Chambord. You will understand me, I hope, if you will listen to me ; it is a holiday, and we have time to talk.”<sup>1</sup>

And then he continues to describe the court :—

“ Imagine what a court is . . . there are here neither wives nor children : listen : the court is an honest place, if you will, but very strange. I know little of the court of the present day ; but I know—and who does not know ?—that of the great King Louis XIV., the model of all, the court *par excellence*, of which so

<sup>1</sup> “ Si nous avions de l'argent à n'en savoir que faire, toutes nos dettes payées, nos chemins réparés, nos pauvres soulagés, notre église d'abord (car Dieu passe avant tout) pavée, recouverte et vitrée, s'il nous restait quelque somme à pouvoir dépenser hors de cette commune, je crois, mes amis, qu'il faudrait contribuer, avec nos voisins, à refaire le pont de Saint-Avertin, qui, nous abrégant d'une grande lieue le transport d'ici à Tours, par le prompt débit de nos denrées, augmenterait le prix et le produit des terres dans tous les environs ; c'est là, je crois, le meilleur emploi à faire de notre superflu, lorsque nous en aurons. Mais d'acheter Chambord pour le duc de Bordeaux, je n'en suis pas d'avis, et ne le voudrais pas, quand nous aurions de quoi, l'affaire étant, selon moi, mauvaise pour lui, pour nous et pour Chambord. Vous l'allez comprendre, j'espère, si vous m'écoutez ; il est fête, et nous avons le temps de causer.”



many memoirs remain to us, wherein figure 'the woman Montespan and the girl la Vallière' . . . poisoning, debauchery of every kind, prostitution, in fact every crime and every disgrace, either openly asserted or insinuated. What! . . . do they bid you contribute your money for this monument of infamy, where the great lords and ladies, royal and noble, 'used to live in promiscuity'? Do they dare to ask of you any sentimental sacrifice on behalf of these royal and aristocratic sinners? 'Do you know that there is not in France a single noble family—that is to say, noble by race and ancient origin—which does not owe its fortune to women—you understand me?'"

So ran the style and manner of Courier from beginning to end. His arguments are few, and rather suggested than maintained; his sentences are short, epigrammatic, biting. The *Simple Discourse* brought its author into some trouble. He was put on his trial for bringing the monarchy into contempt, and sentenced to two months' imprisonment and to pay a fine of two hundred francs; but this must have given him more satisfaction than annoyance. He came out a martyr; his popularity had been doubled; and he had the pleasure of knowing that he was considered a worthy heir of the best pamphleteers of the Revolution. Béranger said of him: "In M. Courier's place, I would not give these two months' of imprisonment for a hundred thousand francs."

The *Workman's Service-book of Paul-Louis during his Sojourn in Paris* and the *Village Gazette* preceded only by a short time the *Pamphlet of Pamphlets*, his last work, in which Courier attempts to place the pamphlet, as a literary production, on a right footing, laughs at the sneers of the ignorant, and quotes Pascal, Cicero, Demosthenes, St. Paul, and Franklin, as pamphleteers.

The death of Courier was a tragedy, and for five years a mystery. Whilst he was at the height of his reputation, on the 10th of April, 1825, his dead body was found in the wood surrounding his cottage, pierced by more than one bullet.

The excitement was great throughout France ; for there were many who suspected that his fate was due to the animosity of those whom he had attacked with his pen. His man-servant, Frémont, was accused of the murder, but unanimously acquitted ; and no clue could be discovered to the perpetrators of the crime. In 1830, however, the truth was brought to light in an unexpected manner. A half-witted and dissolute woman, Grivault, who resided near the spot, was riding one night past the scene of the murder, when her horse started, and almost threw her. In her terror she exclaimed : " My horse was nearly as much afraid as I was when they killed M. Courier." Her companion questioned her, and she finally admitted that she had seen Frémont and a couple of companions, one of whom had since died, shoot their master. Frémont could not be tried again for the crime of which he had been acquitted, but he bore witness against the man whom Grivault had implicated. The latter was acquitted by the jury, who seem to have thought that he was guilty only of concealing the murder. Frémont died within a few days of the trial by " the visitation of God."

Another pamphleteer and journalist, Hugues-Fillipe-Robert de la Mennais,<sup>1</sup> born at Saint-Malo, the birthplace of Chateaubriand, was a Roman Catholic priest, and lived some years after the establishment of the Second Empire, but nearly all his works were written before that time. It has been said of him that he recalls the memory of Pascal by the spiritual tone of his writings. His youth was spent in solitude ; he was destined by his parents for the service of the Church ; and, if he had lived in the age of Bourdaloue, he would have been consecrated like him to the order of the Jesuits, and might have resembled him in his life and in his works. As it was, he became a priest in 1811, and had already published two years before *Reflections*

on the *State of the Church*, in which he attacks indifference in religion, and proposes, as the sole remedy, free assemblies of the clergy. This book was seized and suppressed by the imperial police, and printed by la Mennais anew some years afterwards. When Napoleon returned from Elba to reign for a hundred days, la Mennais, who had written "that to study the genius of Bonaparte in the institutions which he had founded, was to sound the darkest depths of crime, and to seek the measure of human perversity," fled to England, and remained there for seven months. Soon appeared the first volume of his *Essay on Indifference in Matters of Religion* (1817), wherein he gave promise of being a powerful apologist of Christianity, in an age when the Roman Catholic faith in France sorely needed an apologist. He states :

"The age which is the most diseased is not the one which is impassioned for error, but the one which neglects and disdains truth. . . . Religion, morality, honour, duty, the most sacred principles as well as the most noble sentiments, are only a kind of dreams, brilliant and light phantoms which disport themselves for a moment in far-away thoughts, soon to disappear without returning. No ; never was anything like it seen, nor could even have been imagined. It needed long and persevering efforts, an indefatigable struggle of man with his conscience and reason, to reach at last this brutal recklessness. Contemplating with equal disgust truth and error, he pretends to believe that one cannot distinguish them, in order to confound them in a common contempt ; the last degree of intellectual depravation at which he can arrive."<sup>1</sup>

He further declares that the source of all evil is the contempt for authority and the supremacy of individual reason. Few books have had such a rapid success, and forty thousand copies of this first volume were sold within a few years. In the second volume, published in 1820, he tried to prove

<sup>1</sup> Introduction, vol. i.

that the Catholic dogma and human tradition were in perfect harmony, and in the two last volumes, which appeared in 1824, he argues that Christianity alone possesses eminently the property of being perpetual and eternal. The *Essay* was vehemently attacked by prelates as well as by philosophers; and was followed by a *Defence of the Essay*, in which Lamennais further developed his system. He was now settled in Paris, and gave much of his time to journalism, in common with many others of his order; and, after writing for the *Conservateur*, he paid a visit to Rome, where he refused to be made a cardinal. On his return he wrote *On Religion, considered in its relations with the Civil and Political Order*, in which he claimed for Rome spiritual supremacy. This book drew upon him a judicial condemnation, and made him anew many enemies, above all amongst the French bishops. When the revolution of 1830 broke out he published a pamphlet, full of enthusiasm for liberty, and started, with Lacordaire, Montalembert, and others, a newspaper, *L'Avenir*, which took for its motto, "God and Liberty. The Pope and the People." This paper demanded separation between Church and State, the suppression of a State subsidy to ministers of religion, administrative decentralisation, extension of electoral rights, entire freedom of conscience and of instruction, freedom of the press, and the right to hold public meetings. His articles in this journal drew upon him ecclesiastical censure, and in spite of a journey which he made to Rome, accompanied by his two eminent *collaborateurs*, the Pope condemned the liberal theories of the *Avenir*, called liberty of conscience "the tainted source of indifferentism," and the freedom of the press "fatal, odious, and execrable." Unable at that period of his life to resist so grievous a condemnation, Lamennais formally submitted. But in 1834, when he saw that he had no longer any place in that Church which had bartered her liberty for the favour of the State, he published the *Words of a Believer*, in which he re-



tracted his recantation. This book was written in a sort of blank verse, and in a style borrowed from Biblical language, and was not published until Lamennais had hesitated about it a whole year. But then he stated that, "1°, I am conscious that by publishing it I fulfil a duty, because I see no salvation for the world except in the union of order, right, justice, and liberty; 2°, the necessity of settling my position, which in the eyes of the public is now equivocal and false; of cleansing my name, in the future, from the reproach of having connived at the horrible system of tyranny which at present weighs down the nations. If I must suffer for this it does not matter; I shall not regret it. There is for each position a certain kind of courage, which it is shameful not to possess." The *Words of a Believer* is, in fact, as it has been called, a gospel of rebellion, full of indignant remonstrances against the slavery of orthodoxy. It made him many enemies; nearly all his former friends abandoned him; and two of them, Lacordaire and Combalot, wrote to him letters filled with insults. The Pope condemned this book, called it "small in size but immense in its perversity," and severely censured the "fallacious system by which it was attempted to found upon another basis than revelation certainty in matters of religion." An eminent Frenchman,<sup>1</sup> who has many points of similarity with Lamennais, says of it: "The two essential qualities of Lamennais, simplicity and grandeur, are unfolded quite leisurely in these little poems, which are pervaded by exquisite and true sentiment. He created, with reminiscences of the Bible and of the ecclesiastical language, this harmonious and grand manner which realises a phenomenon unique in the literary world of a *pastiche* of genius." Henceforth Lamennais remained a consistent Liberal, and issued several pamphlets and books of a controversial nature in a distinctly liberal

<sup>1</sup> E. Renan, "Lamennais and his Writings," in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, August 1867.

sense. His later years were spent chiefly in a translation of the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, a work of average merit, with abundant evidence of more than average power.

Altogether different in training and in capacity was Charles Nodier,<sup>1</sup> born at Besançon, the son of a lawyer, who received an education as varied as that of Lamennais had been restricted. Nodier was a scholar, a poet, a novelist, a scientist, a grammarian, having an insatiable appetite for knowledge, and the restless spirit of a man whose boyhood had been impressed by the events of the republic. His earliest work, published before he was twenty years old, was an account of the *Use of Antennæ to Insects*. In 1803 he produced a novel, the *Painter of Salzburg*; and in the following year a book of verse, the *Essays of a Young Bard*. Among his novels, *Jean Shogar*, *Smarra*, and *Trilby*, are fantastically but well written. In 1818 he published a work of an entirely different order, a *Dictionnaire Raisonné des Onomatopées françaises*; and ten years later appeared his *Critical Examination of the French Dictionaries*, a work of vast erudition, and bearing witness to great and conscientious labour. In his youth he had written a poem, the *Napoleone*, which obtained a great success amongst the enemies of the Government, and contained some bitter attacks against Bonaparte. As a journalist, he wrote in a Liberal paper, *The French Citizen*, subsequently in *The Journal of the Empire*, and during the Restoration, in the *Journal des Débats* and the *Quotidien*. His imagination often mastered him, so that his facts can but seldom be relied upon, but he possesses a clear and excellent style; and he deserves the description given of him by Sainte-Beuve, as a "futile, facile, agreeable, and genuinely charming writer. Perhaps a brief extract will be held to justify the praise:—

"The incomparable minister, whose private secretary I had the honour to be when ministers were yet wont to reply to

letters which were written to them, having complained one day of my regular want of punctuality, I tried, like a school-boy, to excuse myself by the pleasure I had taken in stopping before Punch's show. 'That is all very well,' he said, smiling; 'but how does it happen that I have never met you there?' . . . It was a sublime speech, revealing a vast scope of political study and opinion. Unfortunately, he only retained his portfolio fifty-three hours and a half, and I did not pity him, for I knew the force of the stoical character of his mind. . . . Notabilities are not lacking before Punch's show; everybody passes it in turn; few are worthy to pause there. The dull idler leaves it in scorn; the *flâneur*, eager for new sensations, salutes it at most with a look of recognition; the pedant, hardened in his stupid knowledge, blushes as he skims it with a timid glance. You need never fear there the rude contact of the coarse mob with its stale and brutish tastes, the scum of insurrection and orgies, which crowd, as a dirty rabble, around the monsters to be seen at the street corners, around the gymnastic quarrels of public-houses and the scaffold; it has seen children without heads, and children with two heads; it has seen heads cut off; it cares no more for Punch.

"The ordinary customers of Punch are of a much better rank. The student, fresh from the provinces, who still dreams of the charms of family and of the farewell his mother bade him. . . . The young deputy, a patriot by conviction, an honest man instinctively, who cares not if he is called up to vote, but comes to meditate for one moment with Punch, about the rational institutions of society. . . . The impoverished peer who leaps from his cab, as he has become more moderate, to take example by Punch, and learn from him to condemn human grandeurs. . . . The scholar broken down by labour whom Punch amuses and makes young again, or the philosopher, exhausted by useless speculations, who comes, as a last resource, to lay down his deceptive doctrines at the invisible feet of Punch."<sup>1</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> "L'incomparable ministre dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'être le secrétaire particulier dans le temps où les ministres répondaient encore aux lettres qui leur étaient écrites, se plaignant un jour de mes inexactitudes régulières, j'essayai de m'excuser comme un écolier, par le plaisir que j'avais pris à

n'arrêter quelque temps devant la loge de Polichinelle. 'A la bonne heure,' me dit-il en souriant; 'mais comment se fait-il que je ne vous y aie pas rencontré?' . . . Mot sublimé, qui révèle une immense portée d'études et de vues politiques. Malheureusement il ne conserva le portefeuille que cinquante-trois heures et demie, et je ne le plaignis point, parce que je connaissais la force et la stérilité de son esprit. . . . Les notabilités n'y manquent pas devant la loge de Polichinelle. Tout le monde y passe à son tour! L'on s'en digne de s'y fixer. L'oisif hébété la laisse en dédain, le flâneur impatient de nouvelles émotions la salue tout au plus d'un regard de connaissance; le poëte, pétrifié dans sa sotte science, la éligne en rougissant d'un coup d'œil honteux. Vous n'y craignez pas le contact effronté de la grossière populace aux goûts blasés et abrutis, comme de l'émence et de l'orgie, qui se roule, sale cohue, autour des monstres du carrefour, des disputes gymniques du cabaret et des échafauds du palais; elle a vu des enfants sans têtes et des enfants à deux têtes; elle a vu des têtes coupées; elle ne se soucie plus de Polichinelle.

La clientèle ordinaire de Polichinelle est beaucoup mieux composée. C'est l'étudiant, fraîchement émoulu de sa province, qui rêve encore les douceurs de sa famille et les adieux de sa mère. . . . C'est le jeune député, patriote de conviction, honnête homme d'instinct, qui brave l'appel nominal pour venir méditer un moment avec Polichinelle sur les institutions rationnelles de la société. . . . C'est le pauvre d'hérédité qui descend de son cabriolet, devenu plus modeste, pour se former au mépris des grandeurs humaines, par l'exemple de Polichinelle. . . . C'est l'érudit cassé de travail que Polichinelle délasse et reverdit, ou le philosophe épuisé de spéculations inutiles qui vient, en désespoir de cause, humilier ses doctrines trompées aux pieds invisibles de Polichinelle."



## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. THE NEW SCHOOL.

THE Restoration was to be signalised by the formation and growth of a literary school, to which some of the happiest products of the present century are to be attributed. For two hundred years French versification had been cast in the mould fashioned for it by Ronsard and Malherbe. Few poets had dared to depart from the classical model, the stereotyped phrases, the regular rhyming twelve-syllabled couplets, which form the bulk of the poetry of France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even Voltaire, Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and André Chénier himself, had not been able to shake off the constraint wherein their genius was fettered by the supposed inviolability of the neo-classical canons. Thus, though we have had from them and their contemporaries a few fine dramas, a few fine attempts at lofty philosophical poems, and a fair number of really excellent odes, we have seen no lyric poetry of the highest order; whilst, up to the time of the Revolution, the ballad, so characteristic of the poetry of England and Scotland, and to a less extent of Germany, was all but unknown in France. The Revolution, however, had worked a complete change in the character of French literature, and of French social and political life; and though the Empire had checked the development of the new types, the Restoration could no longer delay the regeneration of the national genius. And in no respect was this national re-

generation more genuine, more independent of external influences, more superbly triumphant over every obstacle, than amongst the song-writers and romantic poets of the Restoration. Let us hear, on this subject, the evidence of one of the latter class, namely of Lamartine.

“I remember<sup>1</sup> that, at my entrance upon life, there was but one opinion concerning the incurable decay, the actual death of that mysterious faculty of the human mind which we call poetry. It was the period of the Empire, the hour of the incarnation of the materialist philosophy of the eighteenth century in government and in manners. All those mathematicians who then monopolised speech, and crushed us younger men under the insolent tyranny of their triumph, believed that they had for ever exhausted in us that which they had withered and destroyed in themselves—the whole moral, divine, and melodious part of human thought. Nothing can picture, to those who did not experience it, the supreme barrenness of this epoch. It was the satanic smile of an infernal spirit who has succeeded in degrading a whole generation. These men had the same feeling of triumphant impotence in their heart and on their lips, when they said to us: ‘Love, philosophy, religion, enthusiasm, liberty, poetry—all are naught. Calculation and force, figures and sword, everything is there! We believe only what is proved, we feel only what can be touched: poetry died with spiritualism, whereof it was born.’ And they spoke the truth: it had died in their souls, died in them and around them. By a sure and prophetic instinct of their destiny they trembled lest it should come to life again with liberty; they cast to the winds the slightest shoots, as fast as they sprang up in their path, in their schools, in their lyceums, in their primary schools, especially among their military and polytechnic students. Everything was organised against this resurrection of moral and poetical

<sup>1</sup> *Des Destinées de la Poésie*, written in 1834.

sentiment ; it was a universal league of mathematical studies against thought and poetry. Figures alone were permitted, honoured, protected, and paid. As figures do not reason ; as they are a miraculous passive instrument of tyranny, never asking whereon it is employed, making no inquiry whether it is used for the oppression of the human race or for its deliverance, for the murder of the spirit or for its emancipation, the military leader of this epoch would have no other missionary, no other tool ; and this tool served him well. There was not an idea in Europe that was not trodden under foot, not a mouth which was not gagged by its leaden hand. From this moment I abhorred figures, the negation of all thought ; and I have retained against this exclusive and jealous power of mathematics the same feeling, the same horror, which remains with the convict against the hard and icy irons riveted upon his limbs, whose cold and overwhelming pressure he thinks that he feels whenever he hears the clinking of a chain. Mathematics were the chains of human thought. I breathe again, for they are broken."

How were the chains broken ? by whom ? with what result ? We know how Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël had contributed to foster the romantic taste of the age ; how with Napoleon they had been under a cloud, and how the Restoration established their popularity and influence. We have seen, also, how the poets and romancists of England and Germany affected the minds of men who, like Lamartine, reacted against the bureaucracy of the past twenty years. Let us find further evidence by casting our eyes over a few numbers of the *Muse Française*, the literary organ of a sort of novel hôtel de Rambouillet, whereof Chateaubriand was the accepted guide and philosopher.<sup>1</sup> This school was for the most part

<sup>1</sup> "Under his standard we must march in morality as in poetry, in religion as in politics, if we would move straight and far."—*Muse Française*, vol. ii p. 351.

Catholic and monarchical in its tendencies ; for to be so was little else than an irresistible fashion under Louis XVIII. "A new generation of literary men," wrote one of the band,<sup>1</sup> "seek to unite on the same altar the scattered flames of our holy beliefs." Victor Hugo, then a young man of one-and-twenty, who had published his first odes—the "sublime child," as Chateaubriand called him in the *Conservateur*—began life in the same groove. "It is to strengthen the divine breath, to rekindle the heavenly fire, that all genuinely superior minds in these days tend." The *Muse Française* was the vehicle of such ideas as these : as well of the theory as of the practical illustration of the new sensational and romantic creed. It counted as its contributors in prose and verse not only those whom we have mentioned, but also Alfred de Vigny, Emile Deschamps, Madame Sophie Gay, and her daughter Delphine.

## § 2. THE NATIONAL AND SOCIAL POETS.

The romantic school was destined to be still further developed in the decades which succeeded that of the Restoration, and it is in connection with a future period that we shall do well to improve our acquaintance with them. To the Restoration itself more strictly belong the works of two poets of a somewhat different order—national rather than romantic, social rather than sentimental : Casimir Delavigne<sup>2</sup> and Pierre-Jean de Béranger.<sup>3</sup> The former, born at Havre in the year which brought Louis XVI. to the guillotine, was a dramatist of much industry and some success ;<sup>4</sup> but his

<sup>1</sup> Soumet, *Ibid.* vol. ii., p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> 1793-1843.

<sup>3</sup> 1780-1837.

<sup>4</sup> See below, bk. ix., ch. 6



earliest triumphs were due to the *Messénicennes*, a volume of odes inspired, in the first instance, by the disasters of his country under the Empire. The form which he had adopted and found so suitable for deploring the battle of Waterloo, he continued to employ, twice to celebrate the memory of Joan of Arc—a subject manifestly akin to the former one—and afterwards to enshrine his reminiscences of the history of Greece. This latter subject was suggested to him by the dream of Greek re-unification which was entertained by so many poets and even statesmen of that epoch, and which allured the mind of Byron in particular with such irresistible fascination. The title of these poems was borrowed by Delavigne from the *Anacharsis* of Barthélemy, as the poet himself tells us in his preface to the collected odes. “Every one,” he says, “has read in the *Voyage of Anacharsis* the elegies on the misfortunes of Messene. I thought that I might borrow from Barthélemy the title of *Messénicennes*, to describe a kind of national poetry which no one has yet tried to introduce into our literature.” Delavigne’s instinct did not mislead him. It was in reality a new chord which he was striking; and his great and immediate success was due to the fact that he genuinely felt the ideas which he expressed in such beautiful language, and which his generation felt no less genuinely than himself.

His poems on Napoleon exactly hit the mood of lamentation in which France had been left by the reverses culminating in Waterloo. Delavigne had read Shakspeare, and it was not without indebtedness to *Richard III.* that he represented the fallen Emperor asleep in his tent, and the phantoms of his greatest battles reproaching him for his suppression of liberty :—

“ Yet wouldst thou reign, if such had been thy will.  
Thou, Freedom’s son, thy mother hast dethroned ;  
Armed ’gainst her rights by power a moment owned,

Thou hadst resolved her life to crush and kill ;  
 But, the tomb dug for her  
 Or soon, or late, devours the despot still :  
 The tyrant falls or dies ; she knows no sepulchre."<sup>1</sup>

In some of his *Messéniennes*, especially in the later ones, published in 1827, Delavigne takes a distinctively liberal, and even aggressive tone. He was a member of the Opposition party under the Restoration—of the party which displayed the vigour of its opinions in 1830, and prepared the way for 1848. In his fugitive poems he was still more in contrast with the serious, almost devout spirit of the school whereof Chateaubriand and Lamartine were the principal ornaments. He was in sympathy, if not in fact, a pagan, and approached the poetic standpoint of the age of Voltaire.<sup>2</sup>

Béranger was an infinitely greater man than Delavigne—a greater man indeed than any of his older contemporaries, and a greater poet than France had known for a very long time. Type and model of the true *chansonnier*, a song-writer in whom his country and his age found themselves reflected—in whom Villon lived again, and whose spirit breathed the humour and the satire of Rabelais—Béranger is unique in the annals of French literature, and would occupy a prominent position in the literature of the world. Save for his auto-

<sup>1</sup> " Tu régnerois encore si tu l'avais voulu.  
 Fils de la liberté, tu détrônas ta mère ;  
 Armé contre ses droits d'un pouvoir éphémère,  
 Tu croyais l'accabler, tu l'avais résolu ;  
 Mais le tombeau creusé pour elle  
 Dévore tôt ou tard le monarque absolu.  
 Un tyran tombe ou meurt ; seule elle est immortelle."

<sup>2</sup> Witness the following verses :—

And again :

" Alors que ma froide paupière  
 Pressera mes yeux à jamais,  
 Ô Nais, pour faveur dernière,  
 Couronne moi de myrtes frais."

" De ton souffle viens m'enbrâser,  
 Ah ! que sur tes lèvres de flamme  
 Je puisse déposer mon âme ;  
 Que j'expire dans un baiser."

biography, a few letters preserved by his friends, the records of his imprisonments, and his rare business relations, we should know next to nothing of his actual life ; for he clung to the obscurity in which he was born, and which best suited his temperament. His father was bookkeeper at a grocer's, his mother a milliner ; and hardly was he brought into the world when the latter threw him on the hands of her own parents, whilst the father deserted both wife and child.<sup>1</sup> The grandparents, however, persisted in loving the boy ; perhaps they were not long in seeing the stuff of which he was made ; perhaps they did their best to make him what he was. He read all the poetry that he could lay hands on, the *Henriade* and a translation of Tasso, at his grandfather's ; and, when the latter was unable to support him any longer, he went to his aunt's, an innkeeper at Péronne, where he studied Racine, Voltaire, and Fénelon. His education seems to have been stopped when he could read and write ; and he was but a boy when he became a clerk to a popular Republican magistrate in Péronne. Even this work appears to have been too much for him ; and he was apprenticed to a printer, with whom he stayed until his father, who professed royalist principles, sent for him to Paris. The son was dutiful, and assisted the father to the best of his ability ; first in a bank, and when that collapsed in 1798, in a circulating library. He lived by himself, "in a garret on the sixth story on the Boulevard Saint-Martin," so he tells us in his autobiography ;—but a still better description of his life at this

<sup>1</sup> This worthy father had prefixed the coveted "de" to his name ; and Béranger sings in one place :—

" Eh quoi ! j'apprends que l'on critique  
Le *de* qui précède mon nom.  
Etes-vous de noblesse antique ?  
Moi noble ? Oh ! vraiment, messieurs, non !

Non, d'ancienne chevalerie  
Je n'ai le brevet sur velin :  
Je ne sais qu'aimer ma patrie.  
Je suis vilain et très-vilain."

period is that which he gives us in his poem of *Le Grenier* which Thackeray has translated into English ; and of which we give the first couplet :—

“ With pensive eyes the little room I view  
Where in my youth I weathered it so long,  
With a wild mistress, a staunch friend or two,  
And a light heart still breaking into song.  
Making a mock of life and all its cares,  
Rich in the glory of my rising sun,  
Lightly I vaulted up four pair of stairs,  
In the brave days when I was twenty-one.”<sup>1</sup>

At the age of twenty-four Fortune turned her wheel for the light-hearted poet. He forwarded a bundle of verses to Lucien Bonaparte ; and the latter, who had discrimination and a kind heart, sent for Béranger, and gave him a pension of a thousand francs a year—to which Lucien had himself just become entitled on being elected a member of the Institute. Shortly afterwards Béranger obtained a position as literary assistant to the painter Landon, whom he aided in editing the *Annals of the Museum*. A few years later he was appointed clerk in the secretary's office of the University, and remained there twelve years, never receiving a higher salary than two thousand francs. The good points in Béranger's character showed themselves throughout his life, whether he was in prosperity or adversity. He undertook to support his grandmother, whom his father's bank had ruined ; and he put his sister, at her own request, into a convent. His hand was always open to those who

<sup>1</sup> “ Je viens revoir l'asile où ma jeunesse  
De la misère a subi les leçons.  
J'avais vingt ans, une folle maîtresse,  
De francs amis et l'amour des chansons.  
Bravant le monde et les sots et les sages,  
Sans avenir, riche de mon printemps,  
Leste et joyeux, je montais six étages.  
Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans ! ”



were in need. His religion, by whatever name it ought to be called, was a religion of benevolence and charity. Chateaubriand had for some time a considerable influence over Béranger, and tried to put an orthodox veneer upon his faith; but the attempt had to be abandoned as hopeless. Béranger never scoffs at true religion; but he is not orthodox.

It took Béranger some time to realise the fact that he was the great song-writer of his age; that his pastime was really the great vocation and serious labour of his life; and that, let his ambition fly ever so high, he could do nothing better than the *Petit Homme gris*, the *Gueux*, the *Roi d'Yvetot*, and others of the songs of his youth. These earlier efforts had already made him popular and famous; they were handed about, repeated, learned by heart, and sung at the new *Carreau*—a club of good fellows founded on the model of that which, in the eighteenth century, had been frequented by Piron, Collé, and Panard. Béranger was elected a member of the *Carreau*, of which Désaugiers<sup>1</sup> was president; but it was not altogether to his mind. The staple product of its muse was drinking-songs; and Béranger was something more than a rollicking roysterer. So far, indeed, as his popularity and fame were concerned, he might have been anything; for his realistic songs, each one embodying a page of history or a phase of current national opinion, took deep hold of the minds of his fellow-countrymen. It was in 1815 that the first printed collection of his poems was given to the world; and forthwith he was “warned” by the police of the Restoration. In 1821 he printed a second series, and at the same time resigned his clerkship. This resignation did not save him from prosecution and a sentence of three months’ imprisonment. It was enough for his officious persecutors that he was not a partisan of the son of Saint-Louis; he was too powerful, too clever, too free in thought and expression, to be allowed to write with

<sup>1</sup> 1772-1827.

impunity. Moreover, in the pious *régime* of the Restoration, a prophet of the *dieu des bonnes gens* could not hope for a peaceful obscurity. A few years later he issued a volume containing the *Sacre de Charles le Simple*, the *Inflémeut Petits*, and other songs with a manifest application to the dignities of the day. This time [1828] he had to pay a fine of ten thousand francs, and to undergo a nine months' imprisonment. When he was again released he was fairly and unreservedly a member of the Liberal Opposition, and spared neither government nor Jesuits.<sup>1</sup> The Revolution of 1830, which set up Louis Philippe in the place of Charles X., put a stop to persecution. His pen was free ; and he used it to such purpose that after the next Revolution, in 1848, he was returned by the department of the Seine as member of the Constituent Assembly, by more than two hundred thousand votes. It was not by his own choice that this incongruous honour fell upon him ; and after some days he entreated to be allowed to resign a post for which he was altogether unfitted.

Not the least eccentric chapter of Béranger's life is that which records his connection with Judith Frère—the companion of his poverty and obscurity, and the object of his lifelong affection. She had been an *ouvrière* when the plain little

<sup>1</sup> In 1829 he wrote (*Mes Jours gens* ch. 1729) :—

“ Dans mon vieux carquois où font brèche  
Les coups de vos juges maudits,  
Il me reste encore une fleche :  
J’en ris dessus : Pour Charles Dix.”

And presently afterwards, apostrophising himself :—

“ Tes traits aigus lancés au trône même  
En retombant assés échaussés,  
De près, de loin, par le peuple qui t’aime,  
Volant en choeur vers le bat relancés  
Puis quand le trône ose braver son foudre,  
De vieux fusils l’abattent en trois jours ;  
Pour tous les coups tirés dans son velours  
Combien ta mise a talaput de poudre !”

clerk, friendless and starving in his garret *au sixième*, had chosen her for his mate ; and he sings of her with infinite pathos :—

“ Good heavens ! how pretty she is,  
And I, I am so ugly, so ugly.”

The time came when the poet's friends were amongst the most celebrated men in France ; and it was at the height of his fame and influence that he chose to present Judith as the mistress of his house. He addresses her in one of the most touching of all his poems, *The Good Old Woman* :—

“ You will grow old, alas ! my mistress fair ;  
You will grow old, and I shall be no more. . . .

While the eyes search beneath your wrinkled cheek  
For charms which long ago my verse adorned ;  
Young folks, who tales of lovers ever seek,  
Will ask, ‘ Who was the friend so deeply mourned ? ’  
Let of my love, if you remember it,  
The fire, the madness, e’en the doubt be told ;  
And, good old dame ! while by the hearth you sit,  
Repeat his songs, who was your friend of old. . . .

And, cherished object, when my empty fame  
Shall to your life's decline some solace bring ;  
When your weak hands shall on my picture's frame  
Some flowers place, with each returning spring,  
Then to that world unseen your thoughts commit,  
Where we shall ever fresh communion hold.  
And, good old dame, while by the hearth you sit,  
Repeat his songs, who was your friend of old.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Vous vieillirez, ô ma belle maitresse !  
Vous vieillirez, et je ne serai plus. . .

Lorsque les yeux chercheront sous vos rides  
Les traits charmants qui m'auront inspiré,  
Des doux récits les jeunes gens avides  
Diront : Quel fut cet ami tant pleuré ?

But Judith died first of the two ; and the simple old man, full of love for his fellow-creatures, with an eager faith in their progress, in their wisdom, in their goodness, lived on in peace and honour to the age of seventy-seven. Cousin, Villemain, Thiers, were at the deathbed of Béranger. He had been a great sufferer towards the last ; and, as his friends stood round him in his final struggle, he gathered strength to bid them farewell. “ Adieu, my friends, adieu ! ” these were his words. “ Live on ; you shall have, even here, a better world. It is God’s will that men should cease to suffer so much. . . . He cannot help it—*il y est obligé*,” and, turning his face from one to the other, he repeated : “ *Obligé* is the right word.” It was the word of his whole life ; he died a prophet, as he had lived an apostle.

Béranger’s songs have been favourites in all countries, and he has found many partial translators. I have given a verse of one of Thackeray’s renderings ; let me add one from another translator,<sup>1</sup> from a poem, in which the *chansonnier*, impressed by the same feeling which inspired several of Delavigne’s *Messéniennes*, gives expression to the popular worship of Napoleon, in *The Remembrances of the People* :—

De mon amour peignez, s’il est possible,  
L’ardeur, l’ivresse, et même les soupçons ;  
Et bonne vieille, au coin d’un feu paisible,  
De votre ami répétez les chansons. . . .  
Objet chéri, quand mon renom futile  
De vos vieux ans charmera les douleurs,  
A mon portrait quand votre main débile,  
Chaque printemps, suspendra quelques fleurs,  
Levez les yeux vers ce monde invisible  
Où pour toujours nous nous réunissons ;  
Et bonne vieille, au coin d’un feu paisible,  
De votre ami répétez les chansons.

<sup>1</sup> The late Robert Brough, who, if he had not died young, might have been better known to posterity, and whose memory is embalmed in the hearts of his friends, has left spirited translations of many of Béranger’s songs scattered in different magazines. It is to be regretted that they have never been collected in a volume.



Well, my dears, by kings attended,  
 Through the village street he passed.  
 (I was then—the time goes fast—  
 But newly wed); the sight was splendid.  
 Up the hill and past the door,  
 Here he walked—it seems to-day—  
 He a little cocked hat wore,  
 And a coat of woollen gray.  
 I was frightened at his view;  
 But he said, to calm my fear,  
 “Good-day, my dear.”  
 Grandam, did he speak to you?  
 Did he speak to you?”<sup>1</sup>

This worship of Napoleon Béranger carried to excess. He embodied his enthusiasm for the “Napoleonic Legend” in many songs, which, like *Il n'est pas mort*, *La leçon d'histoire*, *Madame Mère*, were far from being his best, and which, by a not uncommon hazard, became the most popular airs of his lyre. There are, in fact, two men in Béranger—not in the eyes of those who regard him merely from an artistic point of view: the politician and the poet. When we say politician, our remark must be only understood to mean the influence the voice of Béranger exercised on politics. Some of his greatest admirers can hardly forgive him for raising the popularity of the name of Napoleon. In M. Thiers and Béranger they see two great men whose indiscreet ardour and unreasoning partiality are mainly responsible for the resurrection of imperialism in France, and whose works, on the whole, have done more harm than good. Hard as this may seem

<sup>1</sup> “Mes enfants, dans ce village,  
 Suivi de rois, il passa.  
 Voilà bien longtemps de ça :  
 Je venais d'entrer en ménage  
 A pied grim pant le coteau  
 Où pour voir je m'étais mise,  
 Il avait petit chapeau

Avec redingote grise.  
 Près de lui je me troublai ;  
 Il me dit : Bonjour, ma chère,  
 Bonjour, ma chère.  
 Il vous a parlé grand' mère !  
 Il vous a parlé ?”

especially to the memory of Béranger, it is difficult to deny that the allegation is well founded. All that is popular may prove either very beneficent or very pernicious. Now in two different classes of literature, no works were more read than Béranger's and M. Thiers'; and as many of the former's were enthusiastic praises of Bonaparte, whilst the second's *History of the Consulate* was one continual chant of ardent Bonapartism, the prestige of the imperial name, which had momentarily collapsed, and might possibly have died out, rose brighter than ever through the efforts of two highly popular men. Béranger was no Bonapartist in the full meaning of the word, and M. Thiers was even the enemy of the Second Empire: but still they both contributed to its advent. A ready excuse, however, offers itself on behalf of the famous singer: in his time Bonapartism was rather a species of opposition than a distinct partisanship; Republicans and believers in the "Napoleonic Legend" under the Restoration, huddled under a common denomination, until it became difficult to say whether Bonapartism included Republicanism, or *vice versa*. Béranger, be it remembered, was before all things a *frondeur*, a *bourgeois*: the middle class, of which he was so complete an incarnation, has at all times been refractory: it always found delight in flinging stones at the powers that be. Such was the character of Béranger; he was a born member of the Opposition, gay, good-naturedly sarcastic, witty; above all, with an inherent liking for Liberalism, and a hatred for priestcraft. But with him, as with many more, the name of Napoleonism and that of liberty were blended in a curious compound. On the other hand, Béranger would not have been a *bourgeois* if Chauvinism had not capped the whole. He liked wit, fun, irony, and bombast; he was at the same time Monsieur Prudhomme and Gavroche; uttered in a breath a mock and a piece of maudlin sentimentalism; was in short a curious mixture of finesse and candour, of simplicity

and good sense. Certain men are apt to be sensible except on hobbies, when they lose their powers of reasoning, and as it were become the caricature of their own selves. Thus Béranger grew prosy and somewhat grotesque when he bestrode the hobby called Chauvinism, and this feature of his work—unhappily not the smallest—is by far the least edifying. His temperament too closely resembled that of the *bourgeoisie* as a class not to oblige him to adapt himself to the fluctuations and caprices of opinion. Béranger was not the leader of the public (save in the Napoleonic Legend); he was the voice of the prevailing dispositions of the hour. He never stood alone, or even with a minority; in reading his songs his countrymen found their leanings melodiously and pungently rendered. Hence his immense popularity.

However, *bourgeois* as he was (the term is not always complimentary) Béranger, with his foibles, with his melodramatic enthusiasm for military glory, had a clear mind and a lofty soul. He loved his country, and he loved men; and, united to the gaiety of his muse the heart of a true poet. His melancholy strains are chiefly found amongst his posthumous songs. They display a tenderness of feeling, a profound appreciation of nature, an oblivion of insults and trespasses, that belong only to the great and good. He rises to a great height, and the nobleness of his sentiments loses nothing—nay, gains—by being expressed in his own crisp verses, apparently so easily constructed, and of such limpid simplicity. What can be more touching than the opening lines of *My Stick*, an ingenious address to his old companion, his stick, wherein a soft melancholy throughout tempers energy of expression?—

“To walk<sup>1</sup> the fields the genial sun gives sign;  
With flowers crowned is every day that flies;

<sup>1</sup> I owe this translation, as well as the following, of Béranger to Henry Carrington.

Come, comrade, humble staff, cut from the vine,  
 The friend that fortune in its mirth supplies.  
 From what famed vineyard didst thou joyance drain ?  
 Its merits have I sung at banquet gay ?  
 If erst thy sap has led my steps astray,  
 Thou dost alone my failing age sustain.  
 Across the woods, the fields, the meads among,  
 Let's go and glean full many a flower and song.

Come, far from fools with me communion hold ;  
 To thee my secret musings I confide ;  
 You hear me sing, with voice now weak and old,  
 Tender regrets, great memories that abide.  
 In cold and snow, when rains and torrents come,  
 The thunder peals, and raging winds are mad ;  
 Then as I walk and dream, or grieved or glad,  
 'Neath my old hat what swarms of fancies hum  
 Across the woods, the fields, the meads among,  
 Let's go and glean full many a flower and song.<sup>1</sup>

Here is another charming sample of the same strain ; it  
 is extracted from *The Falling Stars* :—

<sup>1</sup> " Le soleil aux champs d'aller nous fait signe ;  
 Chaque jour s'enfuit de fleurs couronné.  
 Viens, mon compagnon, humble cep de vigne,  
 Ami qu'en riant le sort m'a donné  
 De quel cru fameux versas-tu l'ivresse  
 L'ai-je célébré dans un gai repas ?  
 Si jadis la sève égara mes pas,  
 Toi seul aujourd'hui soutiens ma vieillesse  
 A travers bois, prés et meissons  
 Allons glaner fleurs et chansons  
 Viens loin des tracas méditer ensemble,  
 Je me fie à toi de tous mes secrets.  
 Tu m'entends chanter d'une voix qui tremble  
 De grands souvenirs, de tendres regrets.  
 Au froid, à la neige, au flot des ondes,  
 Au bruit du tonnerre, au fracas du vent,  
 Combien triste et gai, quand je vais revant,  
 Sous mon vieux chapeau bouillonnement d'idées ?  
 A travers bois, prés et meissons  
 Allons glaner fleurs et chansons."



"Shepherd, you say each has a star  
 In Heaven, which his fate decides."  
 "Yes, child ; such mystic lights there are  
 But night their guiding lustre hides."  
 "Shepherd, they say the azure skies  
 Keep not their secret from your ears :  
 What then that star that madly flies,  
 Flies and falls and disappears ?"

"My child e'en now a man expires ;  
 His star this very moment sinks  
 Amid the friends whom mirth inspires,  
 He joins the song and gaily drinks.  
 In tranquil happy sleep he lies ;  
 His friends around, the wine is near ;  
 See ! a fresh star across the skies  
 Doth fall and fall and disappear.

"Child, that pure, lovely star doth move,  
 For one herself as pure and bright ;  
 A happy girl whose happy love,  
 An equal passion doth requite.  
 Upon her brow her mother ties  
 The wedding wreath ; the fane she nears.  
 Another star across the skies  
 Falls and falls and disappears !

"That star that Heaven so quickly cleaves,  
 Marks some great noble lately born ;  
 The cradle that he vacant leaves  
 Do purple pomp and gold adorn.  
 Minions with poisonous flatteries  
 Were eager to seduce his ears :  
 Another star across the skies  
 Falls and falls and disappears." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Berger, tu dis que notre étoile  
 Règle nos jours et brille aux cieux."  
 "Oui, mon enfant ; mais dans son voile  
 La nuit la dérobe à nos yeux."

"Berger, sur cet azur tranquille  
 De lire on te croit le secret :  
 Quelle est cette étoile qui file,  
 Qui file, file, et disparaît ?"

It is difficult to assign an adequate place to the great singer amongst his contemporaries. His verses resemble nobody else's, his wit is of a peculiar kind, his satire keen, and his heart full of kindness. There was only one Béranger; and, conspicuous as was his individuality it is in nowise intruded into that of others. "What is fundamental and essential in him," wrote a critic who was not always Béranger's friend, "in his lofty probity, the elevation of his soul, his indelible plebeian character; this would atone, if necessary, for many minor sins and affectations. One must always take into account, when one judges him, his virtue, his moral strength, the sentiment which has made him play a great part in political crises, and sometimes subdue the most violent men with the sole word of 'mother country.' Thus, violent men themselves felt honoured in recognising his authority and his devotion." This judgment, one of the most sincere passed by Sainte-Beuve, will not appear partial when it is remembered that he had for Béranger the antipathy which he felt for Balzac.

"Mon enfant, un mortel expire ;

Son étoile tombe à l'instant.

Entre amis que la joie inspire,

Celui-ci buvait en chantant.

Heureux il s'enlait immobile

Auprès du vin qu'il célébrait.

Encore une étoile qui file,

Qui file, file et disparaît.

"Mon enfant, qu'elle est pure et belle !

C'est celle d'un objet charmant :

Fille heureuse, amante fidèle,

On l'accorde au plus tendre amant :

Des fleurs ceignent son sein nubile,

Et de l'hymen l'autel est pret. . . .

Encore une étoile qui file,

Qui file, file, et disparaît.

"Mon fils, c'est l'étoile rapide

D'un très grand seigneur nouveau-né.

Le berceau qu'il a laissé vide

D'or et de pourpre était orné.

Des poisons qu'un flatteur distille

C'était à qui le nourrirait. . . .

Encore une étoile qui file,

Qui file, file et disparaît."



## BOOK IX.

### THE REIGN OF LOUIS PHILIPPE.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. THE HISTORIANS.

AFTER each epoch of unusual activity, and especially activity in civil or international warfare, literature has come to look as a matter of course for the advent of historians of a higher order than the mere writers of memoirs and annals who find their subjects in the commonplace occurrences of every successive generation. The revolutions of empires and dynasties naturally create their own historians; and whatever may be thought as to the interval of time which ought to elapse between a memorable epoch and the writing of its history, the fact remains that a notable era in the progress of a nation is almost always signalised by a notable historical phase in that nation's literature. It was so in ancient Greece and Rome; it was so in France and England during the later middle ages; it has been so especially in these two countries, and in Germany, in the nineteenth century. Not by any means that the labours of the historians to whom I am referring have been confined to the events of their own countries in the times which immediately preceded them; for the special faculty being once evoked and encouraged, it is thenceforth applied to the elucidation of epochs divided from the present one by centuries of time, and to the history



of countries foreign to that in which the historian had his birth. Thus in France no great historian adorned the eighteenth century, whilst the nineteenth has already produced a Thiers, a Guizot, a Michelet, a Thierry, a Henri Martin, a Louis Blanc, and a Mignet. But whilst Thiers, Louis Blanc, Michelet, and Mignet are historians of their own age, the others, manifestly belonging to the same school, and owing the special determination of their faculties to similar causes, have gone back as far as the Merovingians, the Norman invasion of England, and the Renaissance, and abroad as far as England and Germany, for their subjects.

Louis-Adolphe Thiers<sup>1</sup> has a double right to be placed at the head of this list, by virtue of the eminence to which he has attained, and because he was the first to break through the narrow circle of contemporary annalists, who described merely what they had seen and what had made an impression—a just or an unjust one—upon their minds. De Maistre, Necker, Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand, Burke in England, had done invaluable work in their way, but they had not written history. It was reserved for Thiers to be the first historian of his century. Born at Marseilles, related on his mother's side to the Chéniers, he received a classical education in his native town, studied law at Aix, and was crowned by the Academy in 1820 for a eulogy of Vauvenargues. Encouraged by this success, and moved by an ardent desire to make himself a name, he came up to Paris in 1823, in company with his friend and fellow-student Mignet, and published in the same year a book on the *Pyrenees, or the South of France in November and December 1822*. He had brought with him to the capital a letter of recommendation to the restless and wordy orator Manuel, who had just been expelled from the Assembly for his extreme attitude of opposition to the Government, and who

<sup>1</sup> 1797.

was consequently in high favour with the Liberal public. Manuel introduced him to Casimir Périer, General Foy, Lafitte — the financier of the Restoration — and other men of standing and influence. Thiers had confidence, wit, and indomitable perseverance, and he made the most of the opportunities thus thrown in his way. His education had been of a democratic tinge, and he threw himself into the arms of the Opposition party. Of course journalism became his staff, as it has been the staff of so many a young man of letters in that and in succeeding generations. He found work on the *Constitutionnel*, and his articles were distinguished at once by their force, their clearness, and their systematic arrangement.

But it was not to be a simple journalist that Thiers had come up to the capital. Scarcely was he settled in his garret in the Passage Montesquieu when he applied himself with energy to write the *History of the French Revolution*, a work which occupied him for the best part of five years, and of which a hundred and fifty thousand copies were sold within a comparatively short time. In the preparation of this history the natural gift of the historian stood him in good stead. It is perhaps not too much to say that, if M. Thiers had sat down in a library, or even in a record office, to write a history of the reign of Louis XIV., he would not have produced a specially valuable or remarkable work. His documents were the living actors of the scenes which he describes; his art was to take down the narrative of events from the mouth of those who had helped to create them, and to divine the motives and principles of action from the characters of those with whom he was thus brought in contact. Saved from the disadvantage of having himself witnessed or formed part of the Revolution, he yet derived an indispensable aid from his personal intercourse with the survivors of the revolutionary period. Excelling in the art of conversation, he knew how to

extract the materials which he required from men who unsuspectingly revealed themselves to his penetrating mind. He had scarcely a book to which he could go for his facts, for his documents, for the hundred and one suggestions and indications which the books of one's predecessors naturally afford to a skilful literary man. If he had the newspapers and the written records of the Assembly, the Convention, the Directory, the Municipality, I do not believe that he made a very exhaustive study of these ; and certainly with these alone he could never have produced his work. Admirably systematic from beginning to end, profoundly thought out and lucidly explained, full of perspicacity, of movement, of life, of elevation—no mere dry record, but a brilliant exposition of motives, of underlying theories and principles—the *History of the French Revolution* is a luminous and elegant contribution to historical literature. Having said so much, let me add that it is not in the very highest order of history. No partisan can be a historian in the most lofty sense of all. The ideal historian may be fervid and even impassioned on behalf of certain general principles of human belief and action, but he must not be a partisan in respect of the events which he undertakes to narrate. Or, at least, if he be so by conviction and predilection, he must be of such a cold and phlegmatic temperament, of such supreme calmness of judgment and self-command, of such rare power in placing himself and holding himself outside his natural preoccupations, that he can deal with every crisis, every art, every individual, in a spirit of the most complete and uncompromising indifference. M. Thiers was at the commencement of his career almost, but not altogether, such a man. He instinctively inclined to the democratic view ; he thoroughly believed in the wisdom and efficacy of the ideas of 1789, and he could not conceal the fact from his readers. Therefore his history is written with the tone of a man who has his plan carefully laid down from the first, and

who aims rather at registering and vindicating the decrees of fate than at setting forth facts and then inquiring into their causes and effects.

When by a decree of Charles X. and his ministers, dated 25th July 1830, the liberty of the press was suspended and every paper in France required an authorisation to appear, the journalists of Paris in a body protested against the tyrannous order, and signed a formal document refusing their obedience. "The Government," it concluded, "has to-day lost the character of legality which commands obedience. We resist it for our own part; it is for France to judge how far its own resistance ought to go." Amongst the signatures are those of Thiers and Mignet, described as editors of the *National*, and that of C. de Rémusat, editor of the *Globe*. When the fall of Charles X. was seen to be inevitable; when, indeed, blood had already been shed, and the king had fled from Paris, Thiers, Mignet, and Larréguay concocted at the house of Lafitte a plan whereby a member of the family of Orleans should be summoned to the throne; and this plan, in spite of the opposition of many of the popular leaders, was eventually carried out. The conduct of M. Thiers throughout this crisis was bold and resolute. He had his reward in being elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies for Aix, and about two years afterwards was appointed Minister of the Interior. For some years to come he gave himself up to politics, and his pen was comparatively idle. It was not until 1845 that he began his *History of the Consulate and the Empire*, and the laborious work was only completed twenty years later. Simple in style, more clear than concise, not making too many remarks, Thiers makes his readers see and understand everything. He describes battles like a military man, and delineates the financial and exterior situation of France in a masterly manner. He writes history not from a picturesque or philosophical point of view, but as



a statesman. Let a single extract suffice to show how he contrives to make his personages stand out from the canvas :—

“The arts have depicted Bonaparte bounding over the Alpine snows upon a spirited horse : here is the simple truth. He went over the Saint-Bernard mounted on a mule, clad in that gray cloak which he always wore, led by a guide belonging to the country, showing in the difficult passes the abstraction of a mind occupied with something else, conversing with the officers scattered on the route, and now and then asking questions from the man who accompanied him, making him relate his life, his pleasures, his troubles, like an idle traveller who has nothing better to do. This guide, who was quite young, told him in an artless manner the details of his humble life, and above all the grief he felt in not being able to marry one of the maidens of the valley for want of means. The First Consul, sometimes listening to him, sometimes questioning the passers-by, who crowded in the mountain, reached the Convent, where the good monks received him cordially. Scarcely had he dismounted, when he wrote a note which he gave to his guide, recommending him to give it only to the administrator of the army, who was on the other side of the Saint-Bernard. In the evening, the young man, who had returned to Saint-Pierre, was surprised to learn to what a mighty traveller he had shown the way in the morning, and knew that General Bonaparte had ordered that a field, a house, in short, the means of getting married, should be given to him, so that he might realise all the dreams of his modest ambition. This mountaineer died in our time, in his own country, proprietor of the field which the ruler of the world had given him. This irregular act of benevolence, during a moment of such great preoccupation, is worthy of attention. If it be only a pure caprice of a conqueror, scattering at random good or evil, in turns overthrowing empires or building up a cottage, such caprices deserve to be mentioned, were it only to tempt the masters of the earth ; but such an act shows another thing. The human soul, in these moments when it is assailed by fierce desires,

is inclined to kindness; it does a kindness so as to deserve the one for which it entreats Providence."<sup>1</sup>

The remainder of the active and eventful life of M. Thiers, which reached its zenith of power and fame in 1871, is matter of contemporary history, whereof the last chapter has yet to be written.

François Mignet,<sup>2</sup> whose public life was closely interwoven with that of his fellow-student, was born at Aix, from whence he removed to Paris at the age of twenty-seven. He also wrote a *History of the French Revolution*, which appeared in 1824, and was received with a favour due to qualities distinct from those of his friend Thiers and Mignet, although they had selected the same subject for the work on which they

<sup>1</sup> "Les Arts l'ont dépeint franchissant les neiges des Alpes sur un cheval fougueux; vuient le simple valet. Il gravit le Saint-Bernard sauté sur un mulet, revêtu de cette enveloppe grise qu'il a toujours portée, conduit par un guide du pays, montrant dans les passages difficiles la direction à son esprit occupé ailleurs, entraînant les officiers répandus sur la route, et par intervalles, interrogeant le conducteur qui l'accompagnait, le faisant entrer au vic, ses plaisirs, ses peines, comme un voyageur ordi qui n'a pas mieux à faire. Ce conducteur, qui était tout jeune, lui exposait curieusement les particularités de son obscur existence, et surtout le chagrin qu'il éprouvait de ne pouvoir, faite d'un peu d'aisance, épouser l'une des filles de cette vallée. Le Premier Consul, tantôt l'écoutant, tantôt questionnant les passants sur le montagnard, était rempli, parvint à Viterbe, où les bons religieux le receurent avec empressement. A peine descendu de sa monture, il écrit un billet qu'il confia à son guide, ou lui recommandant de le remettre exactement à l'administrateur de l'armée, resta le l'autre côté du Saint-Bernard. Le soir le jeune homme, retourné à Saint-Pierre, apprit avec surprise quel puissant voyageur il avait conduit le matin, et voyant que le général Bonaparte lui faisait donner un cheval, une maison, les moyens de se faire adorer, et de franchir tous les obstacles de modeste ambition. Ce montagnard vint de rendre de nos jours, dans nos pays, propriétés du chalet que le digne maître du monde lui avait donné. Cet acte singulier de bienfaisance, dans un moment d'un grand préjugement, est digne d'attention. Si on le voit de qu'on que capable de sympathie, jetant au bas du précipice, ou le mal, tout à leur tour, les ennemis ne faisant que châtiments, de tels caprices sont bons à citer, et nous en que pour toutes les maîtres de la terre; mais un pareil acte ne se doit pas. — L'âme française, dans ses moments de vie éprouve des douleurs ardentes, les parties de la terre elle fait le bien pour une mesure de mérite, mais qu'elle défende de la Providence."

selected to build their fame, were rivals neither in desire nor in fact. Their histories are complementary one to the other ; and he who would have a true conception of the epoch of which they treat must read their books side by side. There was a sort of division of labour between them. As a well-known literary critic<sup>1</sup> says : "M. Thiers had given the analysis of this epoch, M. Mignet gave its synthesis. When M. Thiers describes, M. Mignet summarises. When M. Thiers relates, M. Mignet reasons. When the one paints, the other calculates. M. Thiers had written the drama of the Revolution ; M. Mignet wrote its metaphysics. Never was seen in a more striking manner the influence of diversity of mind upon the mode of studying a subject, even when the opinions are identical. This diversity is discovered even in the involuntary preferences displayed by the two historians. M. Thiers inclines always towards men of action ; Mirabeau, Danton, Barras, Bonaparte. M. Mignet has a marked preference for thinkers ; Siéyès is his man." The historical plan which one notices in the history of M. Thiers is yet more conspicuous in M. Mignet. The latter writes distinctly and professedly upon preconceived and foregone conclusions. He is the bold advocate of the Revolutionary idea ; he sets out with the assumption that a pacific reform of the French constitution was impossible, and that, consequently, all the errors and crimes of 1789 until 1795 were but faults of degree, and not of principle. The contention may be just ; I am not discussing politics, but history. It is in the nature of things hardly possible that any history of the French Revolution beyond the barest record of facts should be written from a point of view neither monarchical nor republican, but theoretically impartial. At all events that history has not been written ; and least of all was it written by Mignet. Apart from this, Mignet's work is

<sup>1</sup> *Nettement, Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration*, vol. ii. p. 139.

systematic, careful in its details, logical and elegant in style. That it is just and moderate in its general tone, let the following brief extract bear witness as a sample :—

"Thus fell the party of the Gironde, a party illustrious by great talents and great courage, a party which did honour to the young Republic by the horror of bloodshed, the hatred of crime, the disgust at anarchy, the love of order, of justice, and of liberty : a party awkwardly placed between the middle class whose reaction it had combated, and the multitude whose rule it repudiated. Condemned to inaction, this party could but illuminate a certain defeat by a courageous struggle and by an honourable death. At this period its end could be foreseen with certainty : it had been driven from post to post ; from the Jacobins by the invasion of the Mountain ; from the Commune by the relapse of Pétion ; from the ministry by the retreat of Roland and his colleagues ; from the army by the defection of Dumouriez. There remained for it only the Convention ; it was here that it entrenched itself, that it struggled and succumbed. Its enemies, one after another, entered into plots and revolts against it. The plots gave rise to the Committee of Twelve, which seemed to give a momentary advantage to the Gironde, but which only more violently excited its adversaries. These set the people in motion, and they deprived the Girondins, first of their authority by suppressing the Twelve, and then of their political existence by proscribing their leaders."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> « Ainsi succomba le parti de la Gironde, parti illustre par de grands talents et de grands courages, parti qui honora la république naissante par l'horreur du sang, la haine du crime, le dégoût de l'anarchie, l'amour de l'ordre, de la justice et de la liberté : parti mal placé entre la classe moyenne dont il avait combattu la révolution, et la multitude dont il repoussait le gouvernement. Condamné à ne pas agir, ce parti ne put qu'illustrer une défaite certaine par une lutte courageuse et par une belle mort. A cette époque, on pouvait avec certitude prévoir sa fin : il avait été chassé de poste en poste : des Jacobins, par l'envahissement des sans-culottes ; de la Commune, par la mort de Pétion ; du ministère, par la retraite de Roland et de ses collègues ; de l'armée, par la défection de Dumouriez. Il ne lui restait plus que la Convention ; c'est là qu'il se retrancha, qu'il combattit et qu'il succomba. Ses ennemis eurent tour à tour contre lui et les complots et les insurrections. Les complots firent naître le comité des Douze, qui paraissait donner un avantage momentané



Mignet published between 1836 and 1842 a volume on the *Negotiations relating to the Spanish Succession*; in 1845 a *History of Antonio Perez and Philip II.*; and in 1851 a *History of Mary Stuart*; in all of which he displayed the same systematic skill and the same sobriety and vigour of style; so much so as to have earned for himself the title of the French Sallust.<sup>1</sup> He was elected in 1836 a member of the French Academy, wherein his friend, M. Thiers, had preceded him by three years; and he was in addition the perpetual secretary of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

An older man than either Thiers or Mignet, equally if not more distinguished as a historian, though he did not make his *debut* in this branch of literature until they were already famous, François-Pierre-Guillaume Guizot,<sup>2</sup> came up to Paris from his native town of Nîmes in 1805. He was chosen one of the professors in the Faculty of Letters; the chair of history being committed to his charge, although he had hardly then written anything else but a *Dictionary of Synonyms*. Guizot, like Royer-Collard and many other men of the moderate monarchical school, looked upon the Empire with distrust, and certainly never sought employment or honour from Napoleon, or from the great dispenser of his civil patronage, Fontanes. But when the latter, at the end of 1812, offered him a professorship in the Normal School, Guizot did not refuse it. That, however, was the extent of his compliance. Fontanes reminded him that it had become a practice for a newly-appointed professor to deliver a speech in praise of the Emperor, and for a copy of this speech to be placed over night upon Napoleon's table. "I shall not do it,"

à la Gironde, mais qui n'en excita que plus violemment ses adversaires. Ceux-ci mirent le peuple en mouvement, et ils enlevèrent aux Girondins, d'abord leur autorité en détruisant les Douze, ensuite leur existence politique en proscrivant leurs chefs."

<sup>1</sup> Saint-René Taillandier.

<sup>2</sup> 1787-1874.

Guizot replied promptly. "Take back the chair that you gave me. I do not love the Emperor, and I will not praise him." "You will get me into new trouble," sighed Fontanes : but he did not press the point. Guizot delivered his first lecture without a word of the accustomed flattery. It was never known whether Napoleon read his printed copy or not ; but, at any rate, Guizot was left undisturbed in the possession of his chair.

The life of Guizot, like the life of Thiers, was constantly divided between the claims of literature and the distraction of public affairs. From the moment of Napoleon's retirement to Elba, Guizot seems to have been smitten with a desire for political activity, and in the month of May 1815 he paid a visit to Louis XVIII. at Ghent. He was rewarded by being appointed secretary-general at the Ministry of Justice, under Pasquier, and this and other offices he held until 1820, when, in company with Royer-Collard, Jordan, and Barante, he was removed from the Council of State by the duke de Richelieu, the minister of an ultra-monarchical reaction. It was shortly after this six years' episode of politics that Guizot was appointed professor of history at the Sorbonne ; and in an interesting page of his *Memoirs* he has left us a picture of the audience before whom he opened his course on the 7th of December 1820. Students<sup>1</sup> of the various higher schools of Paris were mingled with older men affected by the prevailing attachment to historical studies. The first were for the most part a legacy from Guizot's predecessors ; the last were for the most part rooted in the prejudices which they had derived from the eighteenth century. Amongst the first were many ardent Liberals of an advanced order, already engaged in the intrigues which penetrated Parisian society during the ministry of Villèle and who found the moderate opposition

<sup>1</sup> A. Nodding, *Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration*, vol. ii. book vi. chap. 3.

of the lecturer too cold to satisfy them. Amongst the latter were many who looked with distrust upon the comparatively young man who had not yet secured the personal authority which was soon to add sufficient warrant to his novel historical philosophy. It was a difficult soil to cultivate; but Guizot neither despaired nor failed. He resolved to avoid the recent annals of France, and to carry his hearers back to the lessons of the old *régime*. "I made up my mind," he says, "to re-introduce old France to the memory and the understanding of the new generations." And it was not long before his evident sincerity, his sober style and manner, his philosophical views, his commanding figure and strikingly intellectual face, impressed these rising generations with a sense of his power, and exerted their due authority over the minds of his audiences. Not by any means that he neglected the invaluable lessons of the late Revolution. The umbrage which he gave to the Government, in spite of his moderation, may be understood when we recall a single brief passage from his treatise on *The Government of France since the Restoration*. "For more than thirteen centuries," he wrote, "France contained two peoples; for thirteen centuries the conquered people struggled to cast off the yoke of the victorious people. Our history is the history of this long struggle. In our own days a decisive battle has been fought: it is called the Revolution."

It was upon the suspension of his lectures in October, 1822, that Guizot began to edit the *Memoirs on the History of the English Revolution*, in twenty-six volumes, and *Memoirs relating to the Ancient History of France*, in thirty-one volumes; and, debarred from the lecture-room, he had recourse to the press, wrote articles in the *Globe*, and founded a review, the *Revue Française*, of which a number appeared every two months, and which had a great influence on public opinion. It was not until the year 1827 that he

published his first *Course of Modern History*; but it is not to be supposed that his pen was idle during this portion of his life. His *History of the English Revolution* occupied him for many years before his publication in 1826; and amongst the other fruits of a laborious life may be mentioned his *Essays on the History of France*, which was published in 1824. In 1828 the Sorbonne was reopened; and Guizot's second and third course of lectures was delivered on the History of Civilisation in Europe, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the French Revolution; a course which may perhaps be regarded as the most significant monument of the genius of its author. Here, at last, Guizot showed himself, beyond further doubt, as the greatest French historian of his time; far superior in scope and philosophical power to any of his contemporaries. He was, in fact, the founder of a philosophical school of history; a school in which he has had distinguished disciples, but not one of them—or perhaps I had better say only one of them<sup>1</sup>—as great as his master. In the works of Thiers, Louis Blanc, and Mignet, there are but the rudiments of philosophy; the germs of large ideas and generalisations which are nowhere thoroughly evolved. But Guizot's scope is always broad; his generalisations are always lucid and striking. It was to his courage in being true to himself, and in refusing to contract his ideas to the limits of a subject which might have won him an earlier popularity, that he owes the legitimate triumph of his faculties; and a triumph so deserved and so won is precisely what we recognise under the name of genius.

The great advantage possessed by historians of the school of Thiers and Mignet over historians of the school of Guizot is this: that the former, by their succinct and systematic narratives, produce works more generally useful, and therefore more generally satisfactory. Readers of Guizot and Michelet must be on a higher level of thought in order to en-

<sup>1</sup> Michelet.



joy and profit by what they read, must already know the facts of the epoch under consideration, and be in a condition to receive and appreciate simple deductions and theories ; must, in short, not look for information in the first place, but for suggestions and ideas. Readers of Thiers, Louis Blanc, Mignet, may be breakers of new ground, seeking instruction in what has been, rather than lessons upon what ought to have been and might have been. This distinction once observed, I may add that Thiers and Guizot, in their respective classes, approach nearest to each other by their respective manners of treatment. The method of the latter has been well described by a brother historian, Augustin Thierry, who bears generous testimony to the value of Guizot's most important work. "It is a work," he says,<sup>1</sup> "the most extensive which has yet been performed in connection with the sources, the basis, and the issue of the history of France. Six volumes of critical history, three courses of lectures delivered with great success, constitute this work, whereof the aggregate is truly imposing. The *Essays on the History of France*, the *History of Civilisation in Europe*, and the *History of Civilisation in France*, are three parts of the same whole, three successive phases of the same labour, continued for ten years. Each time when the author resumed his subject—the revolutions of society in Gaul from the decline of the Roman Empire—he displayed greater depths of analysis, more loftiness and solidity in his views. Whilst pursuing the course of his personal discoveries, he has constantly kept his eyes open to the scientific opinions evolved around him, and, grasping them, modifying them, giving them more precision and scope, he has combined them with his own by an admirable eclecticism. His labours have thus become the most solid basis, the most faithful mirror, of modern historical science, in its most certain and invariable aspects. He has inaugurated, as the

<sup>1</sup> *Récits des temps Mérovingiens*, ch. iv.

historian of our ancient institutions, the era of science properly so called; before him, with the single exception of Montesquieu, there were nothing but systems."

Let the reader judge for himself by the following extract—if it is possible to judge by an extract—whether this praise be deserved:—

"Is it not indeed clear that civilisation is the great fact in which all others merge; in which they extend, in which they are all condensed, in which all others find their importance? Take all the facts of which the history of a nation is composed, all the facts which we are accustomed to consider as the elements of its existence—take its institutions, its commerce, its industry, its wars, the various details of its government; and if you would form some idea of them as a whole, if you would see their various bearings on each other, if you would appreciate their value, if you would pass a judgment upon them, what is it you desire to know? Why, what they have done to forward the progress of civilisation, what part they have acted in this great drama—what influence they have exercised in aiding its advance. It is not only by this that we form a general opinion of these facts, but it is by this standard that we try them, that we estimate their true value. These are, as it were, the rivers of whom we ask how much water they have carried to the ocean. Civilisation is, as it were, the grand emporium of a people, in which rolls its wealth, wherein all the elements of its life, all the powers of its existence, are stored up. It is so true that we judge of minor facts accordingly as they affect this greater one, that even some which are naturally detested and hated, which prove a heavy calamity to the nation upon which they fall—say for instance despotism, anarchy, and so forth—even these are partly forgiven, their evil nature is partly overlooked, if they have aided in any considerable degree the march of civilisation. Wherever the progress of that principle is visible, together with the facts which have urged it forward, we are tempted to forget the price it has cost—we overlook the dearness of the purchase."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Quoted, Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe, chap. I.*

In the Revolution of 1830 Guizot took a part rather distinguished than active. He was a member of the provisional ministry of July, of which Dupont de Nemours was the president. Guizot undertook the portfolio of public instruction, and there were not wanting those who expressed an ironical surprise at this selection, and who contrasted the Guizot of 1815 with the Guizot of 1830. Amongst his critics in this sense was M. Louis Blanc, whose words, taken from his *History of Ten Years*, I will quote as much for an illustration of the style of the writer as for the graphic sketch which they convey of Guizot himself :—

“By his noble but sad face, by his clear-cut lip, by his smile full of cold disdain, by a certain feebleness of body, revealing the unquiet of his soul, it was easy to recognise him. We have seen him, since then, in the Assemblies ; one could distinguish at a distance, amongst all the rest, his bilious and enfeebled appearance. When provoked by his adversaries, he fixed upon them the look of one who was ready to convey an insult, and raised his head to the height of his bowed figure with an inexpressible air of anger and irony. A Protestant and a professor, his peremptory gesture, his dogmatic tone, lent him an indomitable appearance. Nevertheless his firmness was entirely in outward show ; in reality, his was a spirit without activity, and his will lacked vigour. The very sequence which was observable in the writings of M. Guizot was due to the obstinacy of a master who will not contradict himself before his pupils. He was considered to be cruel ; he was so probably in his discourses alone ; but by a refinement of pride he liked to compromise himself ; and he who willingly suffered his virtues to lie concealed had seeming vices. . . . His talent consisted in dissimulating, under solemnity of expression and the pomp of formulas, an extreme poverty of views and sentiments, devoid of grandeur. Nevertheless his word had weight, and his disinterestedness, the sobriety of his life, his domestic virtues, the austerity of his manners, made him conspicuous amidst a frivolous and a grasping society.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L. Blanc, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, 1830-1840, vol. i. p. 365.

The picture is doubtless more or less overdrawn and prejudiced; but, even so, how clearly it brings the man himself before us! And at any rate, remembering how characteristic of French literature are the portraits which men of letters have drawn of themselves or of each other, I could not feel justified in omitting one of the most remarkable of them all.

The affair of the Spanish marriages and the political life of M. Guizot, as a minister of State, an ambassador to England, a president of the Council, have no claim to be discussed in a history of literature.

In 1841 Guizot wrote a sketch of Washington, which is not to be compared with the best of his literary productions, although it is held in considerable esteem on the other side of the Atlantic. At the age of eighty-five he brought out a résumé of no great pretension, called a *History of France related to my Grandchildren*, of which the last volume appeared after his death. Guizot was elected to the Academy in 1836, and was at the same time a member of the Academies of Inscriptions and of Moral and Political Sciences.

Jules Michelet<sup>1</sup> was one of the earliest and the most distinguished of the historical school, which, professedly or instinctively, adopted the philosophical method of Guizot, and which, not satisfied with the mere recital of facts, however complete the system upon which it might be possible to arrange them, sought in history its more lofty tendencies, its more pregnant lessons, its more brilliant adornments. Born at Paris a year after Thiers, two years after Mignet, he devoted himself from his youth to the study which was to occupy him throughout his long life, making his first attempts on public favour in his *Chronological Tableau of Modern History* and his *Synchronous Tableau of Modern History*<sup>2</sup>. In 1830 he was appointed to superintend the historical section

<sup>1</sup> 1798-1871.<sup>2</sup> Published in 1823 and 1826.



of the national archives, a position which enabled him to pursue under the most favourable circumstances the researches upon which his more important works were founded. In the following year appeared his *Roman History*. In 1833 he published a *Précis of Modern History*; and in the same year he began his voluminous *History of France*, which consumed the best labours of four-and-twenty years, while a *History of the French Revolution* alone took him six years.<sup>1</sup> The *Sources of French Law* was issued in 1837; he also wrote a volume of the *Memoirs of Luther*, and translated the *Principles of the Philosophy of History* from *la Scienza Nuova* of Vico. His principal work, *The History of France*, has not been concluded; and several volumes of it appeared after his death. He also devoted himself for two or three years to natural history, and wrote treatises of no little originality on *Birds*, *Insects*, *The Sea*, and many other heterogeneous subjects.

The style of Michelet is sparkling, full of breadth and vigour, of fire and originality. The richness of the thoughts seems to clog the pen of the writer, so that his language becomes nervous and even turgid; but the brightness of his pictures, the abundance of his ideas, charm the reader more than any mere evenness and elegance of form. "He does not simply search for the ideas that underline facts; he describes facts, but he surrounds them with a sort of mystic transfiguration; facts, in his narrative, are converted into symbols, events become ideas which move and contend against each other."<sup>2</sup>

We have already quoted Michelet often in the course of this History of French Literature; let us give as one more specimen of his writing the following passage:—

"Louis the Twelfth was a good man, naturally honest, sometimes ridiculous, indiscreet, gossipy, choleric; but he had a heart;

<sup>1</sup> 1847-1853.

<sup>2</sup> Saint-René Taillandier

and the only way to flatter him was to persuade him that you desired the welfare of his subjects. That very cunning courtier, Amboise, under a very heavy outward appearance, gained over the king, and kept his favour, by making much of his reductions of taxes, an economy of halfpence or farthings, whilst he saved money for himself, or cast away millions in his papal intrigue. I do not at all believe what the panegyrist Leyssel says, that in the midst of such a great war, it was possible to reduce the taxes by a third. Besides, who knew it? What publicity existed there at that time? What authentic calculations? What is certain is, that Louis XII., as long as he could do so, made Italy herself pay for the war in Italy, resolved to drain her in order to save France. The army was fed, was paid, as it best might be, by the enemy, and even by the ally. It was, as we have seen from 1806 to 1812, the epoch of the *military chest*, a system which renders the war less burdensome to the nation which carries it on, but which heaps up against it mountains of hatred, and prepares for it cruel reprisals in the day of reverses.\* France felt the wars of Louis XII. little. It was very sincere in its attitude for him. There was a real enthusiasm, there were real tears shed, when, during the sitting of the States at Tours, they saw him pale, tottering, scarcely cured of his illness, tearing up the treaty which would have given France to the foreigner, and saluted him as *Father of the people*. They were thankful to him for three things, all three real: for having reduced the taxes, for having repressed the pillage of the men of war, for having reformed the judges."<sup>2</sup>

\* Michélet's *Économie* appeared in 1865, and this phrase seems prophetic. Napoleon I. made Germany also pay for the wars he carried on against it; and his nephew, or rather France, has experienced the truth of Michélet's scorned remark.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XII., était un bon homme, naturellement bonneté, railleuse parfois, malinnet, l'argent, volé, volé; mais il avait du cœur; et la seule manière de le flatter, était de lui persuader qu'il voulait le bien des sujets. Le très-bon courtois, Amboise, sous une grosse enveloppe, gagna le roi et se gagna, en lui faisant voir ses réductions d'impôts, telle économie de sous ou de deniers, pendant qu'il amassait pour lui, au frottement des millions dans son affaire de papauté. Je ne crois point à tout ce qu'il dit le panegyriste Leyssel, qu'il avait pu réduire les impôts du tiers, au milieu d'une si grande guerre. Qui le savait l'alors? Quelle publicité y avait-il alors? Quels chiffres authentiques? On

Augustin Thierry<sup>1</sup> falls not far short of the genius of Guizot and Michelet ; and indeed, in his style, as in his historical scope, he occupies an intermediate position between these two—approaching both at their best, excelling both in certain of his own higher qualities, and yet without the special strength which has earned for them their highest fame. Born at Blois, he was one of the first students in the Normal School founded under the Empire in 1811. After a specially distinguished course at college and university, he gave himself entirely to historical pursuits from the age of twenty ; and ten years of arduous and unremitting toil resulted in the complete loss of eyesight in 1826. One of his best-known works, the *History of the Norman Conquest in England*, had appeared in the preceding year ; whilst in the year following he gave to the world his *Letters on French History*. His affliction seemed only to nerve him to greater efforts. *Ten Years of Historical Studies* appeared in 1840 ; *Narratives of the Merovingian Times* six years later ; a *Collection of the Monuments of the History of the Third-Estate* (of which the first volume appeared in 1849, the other two later) ; and an *Essay on the Rise and Progress of the Third-Estate*, in 1853. The *Collection* occupied him during seven years, and was only brought to a close by his death in 1856. We may judge of the spirit with which Thierry pursued his labours by a noble and pathetic

qui est sur, cest que, Louis XII., tant qu'il put, fit-payer la guerre d'Italie par l'Italie elle même, décidé à l'épuiser pour ménager la France. L'armée se nourrit, se solda, comme elle put, sur l'ennemi, et sur l'allié même. Ce fut ce qu'on a vu de 1806 à 1812, l'époque du *trésor de l'armée*. Système qui rend la guerre plus légère à la nation guerroyante, sauf à entasser contre elle des montagnes de haine, et qui prépare de cruelles represailles pour le jour des revers. La France sentit peu les guerres de Louis XII. Elle fut très-sincère dans sa reconnaissance pour lui. Il y eut véritable enthousiasme et des larmes lorsqu'aux états de Tours, le voyant pâle, chancelant, à peine relevé de maladie, et déchirant le traité qui eut donné la France à l'étranger, on le salua le *Père du peuple*. On le remercia pour trois choses, vraies toutes trois : d'avoir réduit l'impôt, réprimé les pillages des gens de guerre, réformé les juges."—*Histoire de France, Renaissance*, ch. xi.

<sup>1</sup> 1795-1856.

self-allusion, which he did not hesitate to insert in the preface of his *Ten Years of Historical Studies*: "Blind and suffering, without hope and almost without respite, I can bear this testimony which, coming from me, will not be suspected. There is in the world something better than material enjoyments, better than fortune, better even than health, and that is devotion to science." The science which Thierry cherished was of the severest order, based on rationalism pure and simple. The ideas of 1789 were to him the only satisfactory starting-point for the politics of the future, and he was impatient of all restraint or compromise which prevented their universal application. In the first years of the Restoration he was associated with Cousin and Dunoyer in the conduct of the *European Censor*. "I had," he himself tells us, "an aversion to the military régime, added to a hatred of the aristocratic pretensions of the Restoration, without any special revolutionary tendency. I looked forward with enthusiasm to a future, I hardly knew what, to a liberty whereof the formula, if I gave it one, was this: a government, be it what it might, with the greatest possible number of individual guarantees, and the least possible amount of administrative action." The same ardent, if somewhat vague aspirations, distinguish his writings. With the exception of Louis Blanc, he was perhaps the most complete Liberal historian of his time.

Louis Blanc,<sup>1</sup> from whose *History of Ten Years* I have already made a quotation, was born at Madrid of French parents. After having written for four years in the Liberal newspaper *Le Bon Sens*, he founded in 1830 *The Review of Progress*, and published the year following his well-known treatise on the *Organisation of Labour*. The year after that appeared *The History of Ten Years*, an exhaustive account of the revolution which set Louis Philippe upon the throne, and of the popular agitations and diplomatic intrigues which flowed

<sup>1</sup> 1816.



out of this revolution as their source. It is a work of much erudition and of unstinted labour, well planned and well thought out, missing little that is important in the attainment of a clear idea of the period under treatment, and illustrated by numerous confirmatory documents. It is, in fact, conceived in the highest style of simply narrative history; but it is the work of a democrat professing the most uncompromising form of socialism, and carrying the deduction from his adopted principles to its farthest logical conclusions. Louis Blanc unquestionably aims at the strictest impartiality, and in great measure he attains it; but he seldom resists a sneer at the "general-dukes," the "hero-barons," the "great-men-princes" of Napoleon, or at the diplomatists and courtiers of the Restoration. In his preface he writes :—

"Before taking up my pen, I questioned myself severely; and, as I could discover within me neither interested affections nor implacable hatreds, I thought that I should be able to judge men and things without failing in justice and without betraying the truth."

We may well doubt his freedom from implacable hatreds, at all events from the point of view of the historical critic. Nevertheless, Louis Blanc is a genuine historian, with whom history is always the first and most sacred concern, even when his opinions are warped by the vehemence of his party-feeling. His first words forewarn us of what we are naturally to expect :—

"The cause of the noble, the rich, the happy, is not the cause which I serve. I belong by conviction to a party which has committed faults, cruelly expiated; but I entered this party only on the morrow of its last defeat."

And again, in his introduction :—

"I shall confine myself to showing that the fall of the Empire and the accession of Louis XVIII. were in the interest, and were

the work, of the *bourgeoisie*: and that all the political movements of the Restoration sprang from the efforts of the *bourgeoisie* to subject royalty without destroying it."

And, lest he should still be supposed capable of flattering a hated class by the recital of its triumphs, he adds a note:—

"By *bourgeoisie* I mean the aggregate of citizens who, possessing instruments of labour or capital, work with the resources proper to them, and only in a partial manner depend upon others. The *people* is the aggregate of citizens who, possessing no capital, depend on others completely, and in respect of the first necessities of existence."

To the latter class he professes himself to belong: and it is as its champion that, whether he desires it or no, his readers cannot avoid regarding him.

The following passage, an account of the situation of Paris on the 28th of July 1830, may be taken as a fair specimen of the mingled prevision, vigour, and animus of the *History of Ten Years*:—

"The soldiers had no provisions, and they would have been the first to be disarmed by hunger. Once again, for a servant of Charles X. there was no alternative between suffering the crown of this moribund old man to fall into the abyss and setting fire to the four quarters of his capital. For when a society submits to the rule of monarchs, it ought to know that it may cost as much as that to save itself! The troops, then, were set in motion, the cannon rolled along the streets, and civil war broke out in Paris. What was to be the issue of this war? Men of science, men of letters, almost all military men, began to pity the combatants and their folly. M. Thiers ran for refuge to the house of Madame de Courchamps, in the vale of Montmorency. In the offices of the *Globe* M. Cousin spoke of the white flag as the only one which the nation could recognise: and he reproached M. Pierre Leroux for compromising his friends by the revolutionary tone which he had made the journal assume. The principal editor of the *Globe*, M. Dulac, was absent. In short, everything

was agitation, uncertainty, confusion, in the ranks of the upper bourgeoisie." <sup>1</sup>

Louis Blanc has also written a *History of the French Revolution* (1847), an enthralling subject for Frenchmen, which, in addition to himself, Thiers, Mignet, and Michelet, occupied the labours of Droz <sup>2</sup> and de Lamartine. <sup>3</sup> The latter, however, has received more credit for his *History of the Girondins* (1847), a topic eminently suited to his personal dispositions and predilections. Louis Blanc resided for nearly twenty years in England, an exile from his native land, and has often written during that time articles in English in a style of manly and spirited vigour. He sent also from hence *Letters on England* to the Liberal newspaper *Le Temps*, which show calm judgment, an unbiassed mind, and a true spirit of observation.

I can do no more than mention the remaining historians of this period: Henri Martin, <sup>4</sup> the writer of a remarkably full and trustworthy *History of France*, in seventeen bulky volumes, invaluable to the student, and which has often been put under contribution for this History of French Literature; Amédée Thierry, <sup>5</sup> author of a *History of the Gauls*; de

<sup>1</sup> Mais les soldats manquaient de vivres, et ils avaient été les premiers désarmés par la faim. Encore une fois, pour un serviteur de Charles X. il n'y avait pas de milieu entre laisser tomber dans l'abîme la couronne de ce vieillard moribond et mettre le feu aux quatre coins de sa capitale. Car il faut bien qu'une société sache, quand elle se soumet au régime des monarchies, qu'il peut en coûter cela pour les sauver! Les troupes se mirent donc en mouvement; les canons roulerent sur le pavé, et la guerre civile éclata dans Paris. Quelle allait être l'issue de cette guerre? Les savants, les hommes de lettres, presque tous les militaires, prirent en pitié les combattants et leur folie. M. Thiers courut chercher un refuge chez Mme de Courchamp, dans la vallée de Montmorency. Dans les bureaux du *Globe*, M. Cousin parlait du drapeau blanc comme du seul drapeau que la nation pût reconnaître; et il reprochait à M. Pierre Leroux de compromettre ses amis par l'allure révolutionnaire qu'il faisait prendre au journal. Le rédacteur en chef du *Globe*, M. Dubois, se trouvait absent. Enfin, tout n'était que troubles, incertitudes, confusion, dans les rangs de la haute bourgeoisie.— Vol. i. ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup> 1773-1850.

<sup>3</sup> 1790-1869.

<sup>4</sup> 1810.

<sup>5</sup> 1797.

Vaulabelle,<sup>1</sup> author of a *History of the Two Restorations*; Duruy,<sup>2</sup> who confined himself to the history of Ancient Rome and Greece; Sainte-Beuve,<sup>3</sup> whom we shall encounter further on, but whose *History of Port-Royal* exacts for him a mention in the present chapter; and A de Torqueville,<sup>4</sup> rather a philosopher than a historian, whose works on *Democracy in America* and *The Old Régime and the Revolution* must be classed amongst the most valuable historical monuments of the nineteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> 1799.<sup>2</sup> 1811.<sup>3</sup> 1804-1869.

1805-1859.



## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. GROWTH OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

THE choice of the duke of Orléans, Louis Philippe de Bourbon, in succession to the deposed Charles X., altered the whole condition of government in France, for it was the choice of a prince of the blood-royal, who had long professed to be a Republican. He was himself the son of a regicide, that is to say, of a member of the Convention, "and," he said to Godefroi Cavaignac, one of a number of ardent Republicans whom the Prince had desired to meet, "I never knew a more respectable man."<sup>1</sup> I have nothing to do with the question of Louis Philippe's consistency in accepting the crown. The important thing to bear in mind is that his reign was incomparably more Liberal than that of his predecessor, not only from a political point of view, but on account of the increased freedom of the press. When, in his address to the inhabitants of Paris he declared that "the Charter should henceforth be a reality," he sincerely meant what he said; and he kept his word. The literary annals, therefore, of the reign of Louis Philippe contain few records of the suppression of freedom of speech, few of the suppression of journals; and the works which it remains for us to notice will be found to be permeated, not merely by a spirit of greater courage and fearlessness in respect of their expression, but also, and as a natural consequence, by greater loftiness of view and elegance of style.

<sup>1</sup> Louis Blanc, *Histoire de Dix Ans*, vol. i. c. 7.

The songs of Béranger and Delavigne, as we have seen, were immensely popular during the earlier Restoration period. Both these poets belonged to the Opposition party, and both published their works under more or less restraint from the Government. In Béranger's case this restraint was pushed as far as persecution and imprisonment; and many of his later songs—previous to the year 1830—assumed, as we have seen, a hostile and even a political tone. The second revolution swept away this restraint; and poetry shared in the general emancipation. Its effect is perceptible not only in the increased outspokenness of those whom fear or caution had hitherto fettered in the free expression of their thoughts, but also in a distinct advance of power and brilliancy amongst the younger authors of the day. The poetic companionship which had supplied the contents of the *Muse Française* had been broken up by the ravages of time and of political changes; the magazine itself was defunct, and no similar one had taken its place. But, towards the close of the third decade of the century, the Romantic school of French poetry began to assert its irresistible claims to recognition and approval, and the legitimate heir of the neo-classical spirit was welcomed with enthusiasm. The magazine of the poets was succeeded by a poets' club, the *Cyrcule*, of which Sainte-Beuve, himself a member, writes in these words<sup>1</sup>:—"Around M. Victor Hugo," and in the freedom of a pleasant intimacy, a select band of new friends had been formed; two or three of the older ones had joined it. The evenings were passed in company; the verses which had been written were recited. . . . The genuine middle-age was studied, appreciated in its architecture, in its chronicles, in its picturesque vividness; there was a sculptor, a painter, amongst these poets, and Hugo, who in chiselling and in colour rivalled both artists." No doubt the romanticism of the *Cyrcule* was too pronounced; too

<sup>1</sup> *Critique et Histoire*, vol. i, p. 363.

\* 1802.

subject to exaggeration ; but no less exaggerated was the spite which the champions of the older classical forms displayed towards the innovators. The battle was waged in the newspapers ; in the drawing-room it made the plot of a dialogue by Baour-Lormian,<sup>1</sup> *The Classical and the Romantic*, wherein he fought valiantly for the older school. The ephemeral success of this piece incited him to the production of the *Alarm Gun*, a satire, in which he makes the most heroic efforts to crush the new generation of poets.<sup>2</sup> Lemercier, too, whom some one had accused of the paternity of the new school, strenuously repudiated the idea in his *Cain, a Melodramatic Parody, preceded by a prologue and a pot-pourri-preface*, in one line whereof he exclaims with indignation, "Avec impunité les Hugo font des vers !" To such a length was the battle carried, that in 1829 seven wise men of Paris, amongst whom was the author of the *Alarm Gun*, with Arnault and Etienne, petitioned the king to exclude the pest of romanticism from the Théâtre Français ; whereupon Charles X. very sensibly replied that, when poetry was in question, he had only a place in the pit.

The part which Victor Hugo took in this literary controversy was that of a recognised leader, and the prefaces to his earlier works—to his plays in particular—contain the principles of the school, together with their vindication. The preface to *Cromwell* (1827) is a studied "defence and illustration" of the new poetic theory ; and indeed there is more than a superficial parallel between this essay of Hugo's and the work of Joachim du Bellay.—between the *Cénacle* and the *Pléiade*.<sup>3</sup> Humanity, says Hugo, may be divided into

<sup>1</sup> 1770-1854.

<sup>2</sup> "Il semble que l'excès de leur stupide rage  
A métamorphosé leurs traits et leur langage ;  
Il semble, à les ouïr grognant sur mon chemin,  
Qu'ils ont vu de Circé la baguette en ma main."

<sup>3</sup> I am adopting the observation of M. Demogeot.

three grand phases, the primitive ages, antiquity, the modern ages; and the poetry corresponding to these phases adopts the characteristic forms of ode, epic, and drama. The poetry of modern ages, of the Christian epoch, is dramatic; the supreme ideal of modern poetry is character. As for the rules of the drama, we are not to be fettered by Aristotle; Hugo, like Goethe, recognises little more than the unity of action—the *ensemble, das Fassliche*. Hence followed, as a matter of course, a scathing criticism of the classical school, which would have been all the more forcible if Hugo's exaggerated realism had not placed so strong a weapon of defence in the hands of his victims, and generated something like a reaction in their favour even amongst his own disciples. After the abortive attempt of the seven wise men to enlist Charles X. in their cause, Hugo prepared a drama for the Théâtre Français, which in fact put his opponents to utter rout. *Heræus* was first acted in February 1830. Long before the representation began, every part of the theatre was crammed by artists, Bohemians, Romanticists of every shade, to the exclusion of the unfortunate partisans of the classical school, nicknamed *perruques*, periwigs, whom this quaint outcome of the new school was intended to astonish. The young Parisians, who had by this time begun to make Hugo their idol, took up the quarrel with enthusiasm; and they now formed a new club, *le Petit Cénacle*, which pushed to the point of ridicule the revolution commenced by its prototype.

## § 2. THE POETS OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

Victor Hugo was the son of an old republican soldier who had rallied to the Empire, and of a legitimist mother, the daughter of a shipowner of Nantes. He was born at Besançon, where general Joseph-Léopold Sigisbert Hugo



commanded the garrison. For seven years the boy travelled from place to place with his parents; but in 1809 Madame Hugo settled with her children at the convent of the Feuillantines, in Paris, whilst the father resided at Madrid as Master of the Royal Household. There, in 1811, the general's family joined him; but the incompatibility of political opinions, which had long existed between the parents of the poet, ended at last in open rupture; and shortly after the first Restoration General Hugo separated from his wife, and deprived her of the care of her children. The young Victor, throughout these eventful years, in which the lights and shadows of life had been indelibly impressed upon his plastic mind, had displayed a precocious talent, and, much against his father's will, spent every leisure moment in composing verses and romances. At the age of fourteen he wrote a drama, *Artamène*, to celebrate the accession of Louis XVIII., and in the following year he obtained an *accessit* for a poem on the *Advantages of Study*, in competition for a prize of the Academy.<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1819 that General Hugo consented that his son should pursue his natural bent; and the young poet now threw himself into his career with enthusiasm. His first efforts were made chiefly through the newspapers, where his vigour, his brilliancy, and the notable if not always sustained grandeur of his ideas at once attracted attention. He was, to begin with, very naturally a royalist, and he celebrated, in poems rivalling the *Messéniennes* of Delavigne, the sorrows and sufferings of the victims of the Revolution. One poem in particular, on the reception into heaven of Louis XVII., secured for him the special favour of the king and the monarchical party. At this crisis<sup>2</sup> a love affair

<sup>1</sup> It is said he would have received the prize, but for an allusion to his age—

“Moi qui, fuyant toujours les cités et les cours,  
De trois lustres à peine ai vu finir le cours.”

<sup>2</sup> When Victor Hugo was in his nineteenth year.

intervened, and did much to give to Victor Hugo, or at least to develope in him, the ultra-romanticism which has ever since been so prominent a characteristic of his mind. The lady's friends forbade her intercourse with Hugo. The latter, in the midst of his melancholy work, wrote two weird romances, *Bay-Jargal*, in which one of the heroes is a repellent negro, Habibrah; and *Han of Iceland*, which Sainte-Beuve, already on terms of intimacy with him, declares to have been an allegory, intended to be understood only by his *contemporains*. Han is a hideous ogre, living in the ruins of Arbar in the company of a congenial bear, and was drawn as a type of the obstacle to the lover's attachment. The lovers themselves are represented by Ethel, who falls into the ogre's power, and Ordener; and we can perceive already the dramatic strength, and the talent and fancy for depicting forcible contrasts, in the elaboration of this lucid idea.

In 1822 the obstacle was removed, chiefly by Hugo's literary success and increased income; and the marriage was permitted. The poet, encouraged by Chateaubriand and patronised by the court, had founded a literary *Conseil*, which was fairly successful from a commercial point of view; and, moreover, Louis XVIII., about this time, did himself the honour to confer a pension on the poet. A friend and old schoolfellow of the latter's, Delon, had been condemned to death *en contumace* for his share in a conspiracy against the Government, and Hugo wrote to the mother, offering her son an asylum. "I am too much of a royalist," he said "for them to think of seeking him in my rooms." The letter was opened in the post office; the king saw it and he gave the writer the next pension on the civil list that fell vacant. Hugo's fame spread quickly, and his friends increased. It was now that the literary *salons* began, of which I have already spoken, and his little house in the Rue Vaugnard was frequented by men like de Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, the two

Deschamps, Guiraud, and de Beauchesne. Amongst them they agreed that a fresh departure in poetry was absolutely required ; and it was from the year 1824 that Victor Hugo began to enunciate his new ideas.

It was in the year 1828 that Victor Hugo produced a volume of poems, the *Orientales*, which fully illustrated in the lyric vein the principles which he had laid down and insisted upon. Politics, the poetry of melancholy, are here completely laid aside ; in their place we have sparkling beauties of conception, of style, of colouring. It is for the first time the inspired poet whom we encounter ; the poet who holds the hands of Byron and of Swinburne, who was in fact indebted to Byron as Swinburne was to be indebted—and was to boast of his indebtedness—to him. The same ardent spirit is manifested in his *Autumn Leaves*, published in 1831—a spirit which the poet has described in the latter volume, in verses which have all the elevation of an old Hebrew seer, carried away in the magnification of his own office.

“ It is that glory, love, to live, to die,  
Waves that unceasing follow waves that fly,  
Each breath, each ray of light, or good or ill,  
Cause my dear crystal soul to shine and thrill,  
Soul, thousand-tongued soul, which God, whose praise I sing,  
Midmost has placed to echo everything.”<sup>1</sup>

To the novels and the dramas of Victor Hugo I shall have occasion to return. Amongst his poems, published subsequently to those already mentioned, are the *Songs of Twilight* (1835), *Rays and Shadows* (1840), *Inner Voices*, *The Chastisements* (1853), *Contemplations* (1856), *The Legend of*

<sup>1</sup> “ C’est que l’amour, la tombe, et la gloire, et la vie,  
L’onde qui fuit, par l’onde incessamment suivie,  
Tout souffle, tout rayon, ou propice ou fatal,  
Fait reluire et vibrer mon âme de cristal,  
Mon âme aux mille voix, que le Dieu que j’adore,  
Mit au centre de tout, comme un écho sonore.”

*Centuries* (1859), of which the second part has just appeared, the *Song of the Streets and of the Woods* (1865), and *The Terrible Year* (1872).

Some of the works mark notable changes in the poet's mind. Compare, for instance, the *Songs of Twilight* with *The Terrible Year*, and it seems as if these poems were by two different hands. I do not, however, intend to allude to those productions of Victor Hugo that were posterior to 1848; this is beyond the bounds of my assigned ground; and, however tempting it may be to dilate upon such poems as the *Legend of Centuries* and *Chastisement*, that is upon the loftiest expression of this lofty genius, we have quite enough to deal with, for Victor Hugo was as prolific as he was precocious. His lyre seemed to possess all strings; he could render the harsh accents of war and tempests, and the tender, dreamy love of the most graceful lyricism. The public at large knew Victor Hugo rather as the Michel Angelo of modern literature, as the powerful exponent of deep and noble thoughts. This aspect of his poetical talent has thrown a shadow over the softer accents of his voice, over those delightful pieces of joy and melancholy, than which, in their own way, there are none nobler in any literature. The following verses from one of his early productions, in the *Songs of Twilight*, are a very fair instance of this charming mood, which seems to have preceded the more mature and luxuriant phase of Hugo's career, as spring precedes summer —

"If some fragrant lawn be found,  
By dews of Heaven blest,  
Where are seen the whole year round  
Flowers in beauty drest;  
Where rose, pink, and lily rare,  
All in rich profusion are,  
I would make a pathway there,  
Where your foot should rest.



"If there be, that well can love  
 Some devoted breast,  
 Which all honour doth approve,  
 And the base detest ;  
 If that bosom always beat,  
 To perform heroic feat,  
 There I find a pillow meet,  
 Where your brow should rest.

"If a dream of love there be,  
 By all sweets possess,  
 Where each fleeting hour we see  
 Whatsoe'er is best ;  
 Dream God hallowed, bright, and kind,  
 Where the soul to soul is joined,  
 There a shelter would I find,  
 Where your heart should rest."<sup>1</sup>

*Rays and Shadows*, written five years later, contains some of Victor Hugo's most brilliant feats of versification ; but already the poet's thoughts are becoming more serious. However, although his genius has constantly ascended, as far at least as this book has to deal with him, it cannot for a moment be said that the Hugo of 1830 is unworthy of the Hugo of the most brilliant times. His *Odes and Ballads* contained some of his first lines, written long before he was twenty ; and yet therein are found sentiments of the highest order, and verses as majestic, as ele-

- |                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 "S'il est un charmant gazon | Si toujours ce noble sein   |
| Que le ciel arrose,           | Bat pour un digne dessein ! |
| Où brille en toute saison     | J'en veux faire le coussin  |
| Quelque fleur éclore,         | Où ton front se pose !      |
| Où l'on cueille à pleine main | "S'il est un rêve d'amour   |
| Lis, chèvrefeuille ou jasmin, | Parfumé de rose,            |
| J'en veux faire le chemin,    | Où l'on trouve chaque jour, |
| Où ton pied se pose.          | Quelque douce chose ;       |
| "S'il est un sein bien aimant | Un rêve que Dieu bénit,     |
| Dont l'honneur dispose        | Où l'âme à l'âme s'unit,    |
| Dont le ferme dévouement,     | Où ! j'en veux faire le nid |
| N'ait rien de morose,         | Où ton cœur se pose !"      |

vated and rhythmical, as the magnificent lines of *The Legend of Centaurs*; witness the opening stanzas of *The Two Islands*:—

“ There are two isles whose oceans wide  
A spacious world doth separate,  
And which from far, frown o’er the tide,  
Like heads of giants, gaunt and great;  
And looking on their summits steep,  
You guess God raised them from the deep,  
For some mysterious dread design,—  
Their brows with bolts of thunder smoke,  
Their bare sides foam with ocean’s stroke,  
Their breasts volcanic groans confine.

“ These isles, where ocean’s shattered spray  
Upon the ruthless rocks is cast,  
Seem like two treacherous ships of prey  
Made by eternal anchors fast.  
The hand that settled, bleak and black,  
These shores in their unpeopled track,  
And clad in fear and mystery,  
Perchance thus made them tempest-torn,  
That Bonaparte might there be born,  
And that Napoleon there might die.

“ There was his cradle, there his tomb,  
’Tis for all time enough to say;  
A world, to life or death, may come;  
These words shall never fade away.  
Upon those isles, that dismal coast  
Shall come, at summons of his ghost,  
All peoples of futurity:  
Thunders that blast their rugged forms,  
And all their rocks, and all their storms,  
Nought but of him a record be.”

<sup>1</sup> Il est deux, les deux au monde  
Sont les deux îles d’Océan.

Et qui de leur dos dressent l’écueil,

Comme des têtes de géants.

On dirait, on croirait leurs fronts,

Que Dieu les deux îles élevés

Donne un formidable écueil.

Leur dos dressent de rochers de sombres écueils,

Son dos Éternel sur et tout imposé,

Des colossaux géants et dans leur sein

In all these lyrics, excepting perhaps those portions of *Odes and Ballads* that refer to politics, and especially to Napoleon, there is not a discordant, not a jarring note ; whoever can understand poetry finds there treasures of pure poetic feeling. Had Victor Hugo merely confined himself to art pure and simple he would still be the greatest of French lyric poets. But his talent is many-sided, and in romance and in the drama he has left, as in lyric poetry, indelible traces. Every genius has his peculiarities ; the most prominent of Victor Hugo's literary preferences is his love for antithesis. He likes to soar from the earth to the sky, from a worm to a star.

“Madam, a man is there, in the shade, under your feet,  
Who loves you, lost in the darkness which veils him,  
Who suffers, an earth-worm in love with a star.”<sup>1</sup>

He uses antithesis so repeatedly, that in other hands than his the practice would become tedious. That, however, is Hugo's worst fault. His poetry always interests and edifies ; it always appeals to the highest feelings of nature, and the form is never below the essence. It is a splendid picture in a gorgeous frame.

After Victor Hugo, we naturally turn to Alphonse de

“Ces îles où le flot se broie,  
Entre des écueils décharnés,  
Sont comme deux vaisseaux de proie,  
D'une ancre éternelle enchainés.  
La main qui de ces noirs rivages,  
Disposa les sites sauvages,  
Et d'effroi les voulut couvrir,  
Les fit si terrible peut-être,  
Pour que Bonaparte y put naître,  
Et Napoléon y mourir !

“Là fut son berceau ! Là sa tombe,  
Pour les siècles, c'en est assez ;  
Ces mots, qu'un monde naisse ou tombe,  
Ne seront jamais effacés.  
Sur ces îles à l'aspect sombre  
Viendront, à l'appel de son ombre,  
Tous les peuples de l'avenir ;  
Les foudres qui frappent leurs crêtes,  
Et leurs écueils, et leurs tempêtes,  
Ne sont plus que son souvenir.”

<sup>1</sup> “Madame, sous vos pieds, dans l'ombre, un homme est là,  
Qui vous aime, perdu dans la nuit qui le voile ;  
Qui souffre, ver de terre amoureuse d'une étoile.”

Lamartine.<sup>1</sup> The poet, when quite young, read Berquin, Fénelon's *Telemachus*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, the *Idylls* abbreviated, and a translation of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*; and the influence which these books exercised on his youthful mind seems never to have abandoned him. At the age of seventeen he left the college of the Jesuits, where he had been brought up, and began to study the modern poets, who "feel, think, love, sing, as we think, love, sing, we men of modern days: Tasso, Dante, Petrarch, Shakspeare, Milton, Chateaubriand, and, above all, Ossian, that poet of the vague—that northern Dante, as great, as majestic, as supernatural as the Dante of Florence, and who draws often from his phantoms scenes more human and more heartrending than those of the heroes of Homer."<sup>2</sup> Lamartine appears to have shared with Napoleon this excessive admiration for Macpherson's Ossian. For nearly three years he remained in Italy, and only returned to his native country in the year 1814. In 1820 he published his first volume of poetry, the *Poetical Meditations*, which met with a great and deserved success. They are original, elegant in form, and filled with partly religious, partly melancholy thoughts, which at that time had the charm of novelty. The *Ode to Manuel* and the *Ode to Donald* were admired by all true lovers of lyric poetry; whilst the rising generation fell into enthusiasm over such harmonious elegies as *Isolation*, the *Fale*, the *Autumn*, and, above all, over the *Lake*, which has been called "a work of unhopcd-for perfection, a profound and limpid union, an image found once, and recognised by all hearts." A few days after the publication of the *Meditations* he married a young English lady, and published in 1823 his *New Meditations*, which was not so well received as his earlier volume, but which contains nevertheless some of the best lyric poems written in French, and one odd, the *Lunaparte*, which possesses great depth, and sometimes reaches the

<sup>1</sup> 1790-1869.<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, i. 1.



sublime. His *Death of Socrates*, a poetical imitation of Plato's *Phædo*, and a charming poetical epistle to Casimir Delavigne, had already made their appearance, when he sent into the world *The Last Song of Childe Harold*, a proof of his admiration for Lord Byron, and in which, whilst speaking of Italy, he said : " Pardon me, shades of Rome, if I am going to seek elsewhere men and not human dust." This gave offence to an Italian exile, Colonel Pepe, and a duel took place, which ended in a reconciliation.

He remained five years at Florence as *chargé d'affaires*, and returned to his native country in 1829. In the following year he was elected a member of the Academy ; a little after appeared the *Poetical and Religious Harmonies*, which, though admired by many, seem rather diffuse. To use his own words—

" My soul has the eye of an eagle, and my strong thoughts,  
Flying like arrows to the goal of their desires,  
Each time when my heart heaves, more eager  
Than the doves of the forests,  
Ascend, ascend always, replaced by others,  
And never descend again." <sup>1</sup>

After the July Revolution, de Lamartine went to the East, and one year after his return published (1835) in prose, his *Remembrances, Impressions, Thoughts, and Landscapes during a Voyage in the East*, in which splendid descriptions often take the place of accuracy and observation. This was followed by *Jocelyn*, a poem. Jocelyn, a youth destined to become a priest, meets during the Revolution, amidst the Alpine mountains, Laurence, a young lady of noble birth ; love springs up

<sup>1</sup> " Mon âme a l'œil de l'aigle, et mes fortes pensées,  
Au but de leurs désirs volent comme des traits,  
Chaque fois que mon sein respire, plus pressées  
Que les colombes des forêts,  
Montent, montent toujours, par d'autres remplacées,  
Et ne redescendent jamais."

in their hearts, but an unforeseen circumstance separates them. Jocelyn, after having taken holy orders, sees Laurence amidst the dissipations of the capital, and again when she is dying in a cottage in the mountains, where he buries her in the same grotto which sheltered their chaste loves. The personages are drawn gracefully, in rather vague outline, but the poem is crowded with pure sentiments and grand descriptions. In 1838 appeared another poem, *The Fall of an Angel*, crowded with the strangest fancies, and the most gigantic and eccentric comparisons, which contains also some, but not many, beauties of the first order. The subject of the poem is Oriental, and something like Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. His last poems, the *Poetical Meetings*, want that spirit and elegance which distinguished his earlier verse. In a literary record we have no need to mention the political opinions and changes of M. de Lamartine; but his speeches delivered in the different Chambers have always been considered very eloquent, and one of them, uttered on the 25th of February, 1848, is said to have allayed the fury of an excited mob. M. de Lamartine has also written several tales in prose, edited two monthly reviews, *The Counsellor of the People* (1849-1852), and *The Civiliser* (1852-1856), and published during several years a *Familiar Course of Literature*, which, begun in 1856, had a legitimate and well-deserved success. His tragedy in verse, *Toussaint Louverture*, met with little favour when it was played in 1850.<sup>1</sup>

Let us give as a sample of Lamartine's poetry a single *Meditation*:—

“ Paternal vales, poor cot, and pleasant field.

Hard by the woods hung on the mountain brow.

<sup>1</sup> The best known of his Tales are *Reginald* (1840), *Genevieve* (1841), *The Stone-mason of Saint Point* (1851), and *Guinevere* (1852). He also published his *Confidences* (1840), *New Confidences* (1851), and a *New Voyage to the East* (1853).

Seems your low roof, by ivy tufts concealed,  
A nest beneath a bough ;

"Ye lawns with intersecting streams and shade,  
Porch where my father, honoured far and nigh  
Told his fat herds returned from grassy glade,  
Throw wide your gates. . . . 'Tis I.

"Here rustic gods, to make their home, rejoice ;  
I hear a horn blare from the turret walls ;  
The air seems laden with a tearful voice,  
Which my young days recalls.

"To thee, my childhood's cradle, I return  
Clinging henceforth to thy protecting hearth ;  
Cities with their vain opulence I spurn,  
I had, midst shepherds, birth.

"A child, I loved far over the plain, like these  
Till eve after the truant lambs to look ;  
And then, like them, to wash their snowy fleece  
In pool of running brook.

"I love on woodbine's supple chains to swing,  
And branch on branch to climb to, where above  
First, I might snatch from 'neath the mother's wing  
Eggs of the turtle-dove."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "O vallons paternels ! doux champs ! humble chaumière  
Au bord penchant des bois suspendue aux coteaux,  
Dont l'humble toit, caché sous les touffes de lierre  
Ressemble au nid sous les rameaux !

"Gazons entrecoupés de ruisseaux et d'ombrage !  
Seuil antique où mon pere, adoré comme un roi,  
Comptait ses gras troupeaux rentrant du pâturage,  
Ouvrez-vous ! ouvrez-vous ! c'est moi.

"Voilà du Dieu des champs la rustique demeure ;  
J'entends l'airain frémir au sommet de ces tours ;  
Il semble qui dans l'air une voix qui me pleure  
Me rappelle à mes premiers jours.

Alfred, Count de Vigny,<sup>1</sup> already referred to as having come under the influence of Sir Walter Scott, was born three years before Victor Hugo, and was, like the latter, a romancist, a dramatist, and a poet. In 1822 appeared his first *Poems*; two years later a so-called passion play, *Eloa, or the Sister of the Angels*. The same year which saw the production of *Cinq Mars* brought to light also his first volume of verse, *Poems Ancient and Modern* (1826), in which "The Deluge," "Moses," and "Florida" were much admired. *The Destinies* and *A Poet's Journal* were published after his death in 1864. One of the sweetest and best of his poems is "The Horn," a reminiscence of the tradition of Roland and Charlemagne. I will give but the beginning and the end.

"I love through the deep woods at close of day,  
To hear the horn sounding the stag at bay,  
Or hunter's farewell note which echo wakes,  
And the north wind through all the forest takes.

"How oft have I a midnight vigil kept,  
And smiled to hear it, yet more often wept;  
It seemed the sound prophetic which of old  
The coming deaths of paladins foretold . . .

"Où, je reviens à toi, berceau de mon enfance,  
Embrasser pour jamais tes foyers protecteurs ;  
Loin de moi les têtes et leur vaine opulence,  
Je suis né parmi les pasteurs !

"Enfant j'aimais, comme eux, à suivre dans la plaine  
Les agneaux, pas à pas, jusqu'au soir ;  
A revenir, comme eux, baigner leur blanche laine  
Dans l'eau courante du lavoir.

"J'aimais à me suspendre aux lances légères,  
A gravir dans les airs de rameaux en rameaux,  
Pour voir, se presser, sous l'aile de leurs mères,  
Les tendres œufs des tontreaux."

<sup>1</sup> 17.29.1826.



“The horses halt upon the mountain-brow  
Foam-whitened ; 'neath their feet is Roncevaux  
By day's last dying flame scarce coloured o'er ;  
The far horizon shows the flying Moor.

“Seest thou nought, Turpin, in the torrent-bed ?  
'I saw two knights ; one dying and one dead,  
Both crushed 'neath a black rock's vast fragment lie ;  
The strongest holds a horn of ivory ;  
His soul's last breath twice called us to his aid.’

“God ! how the horn wails through the forest glade !”<sup>1</sup>

The youngest of the poets of the romantic school was Alfred de Musset,<sup>2</sup> and he was also the first who succumbed to death. He, too, was a dramatist and a novelist ; and he left behind him the *Confession of a Child of the Age*, written in his twenty-seventh year, which recalls in some sort the *Confessions* of Rousseau, and in a few of its passages is as filthily realistic. In fact Musset's father had been a literary disciple of Rousseau's, of no great note ; and the influence of

<sup>1</sup> “J'aime le son du cor, le soir, au fond des bois,  
Soit qu'il chante les pleurs de la biche aux abois,  
Ou l'adieu du chasseur que l'écho faible accueille  
Et que le vent du nord porte de feuille en feuille.

“Que de fois, seul dans l'ombre à minuit demeuré,  
J'ai souri de l'entendre, et plus souvent pleuré !  
Car je croyais ouïr de ces bruits prophétiques  
Qui précédaient la mort des paladins antiques. . . .

“Sur le plus haut des monts s'arrêtent les chevaux ;  
L'écume les blanchit ; sous leurs pieds, Roncevaux  
Des feux mourants du jour à peine se colore.  
A l'horizon lointain fuit l'étendard du More.

“‘Turpin, n'as-tu rien vu dans le fond du torrent ?’  
‘J'y vois deux chevaliers : l'un mort, l'autre expirant.  
Tous deux sont écrasés sous une roche noire ;  
Le plus fort, dans sa main, élève un cor d'ivoire,  
Son âme en s'exhalant nous appela deux fois.’

“Dieu ! que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois !”

the eighteenth century romancist was strong upon the young romancist of the nineteenth century. The genius of de Musset was more unbalanced, more ill-regulated than that of any of his contemporaries; "he was the merry and capricious Ariel, taking it into his head here and there to play the part of Caliban; he was the sly Puck, taking delight in the ass's head of Titania's lover. The utmost of which the mind is capable in suddenness, caprice, and promiscuity, seemed to compose his essence; the grotesque, the quaint, the impossible welled within him every instant with the most charming inspirations, and formed the many-coloured tissue of his style. There was in him something of the agile, loose, adorably impertinent. Like the teasing gnat of la Fontaine, his happiness was in making the old classic lions fume learnedly. Manifold, invulnerable, he copied now the fresh attractiveness of Mathurin Regnier (*don Puck*), now the passion of Faust (*The Cape and the Laps*), sometimes the glowing pictures of *Parisiada*, *Lara*, *The Corsair* (*Portia*), more frequently the epic zig-zags of *Don Juan* (*Namurana*); whilst, a rival of Marivaux, he brought to the *Théâtre Français* his delightful *Caprices*."<sup>1</sup> His *Ballad to the Moon*, a parody of the romantic school, was, in its time, sung all over Paris.<sup>2</sup>

De Musset's earliest production was a volume of poems, the *Tales of Spain and Italy* (1830). Perhaps his masterpiece in verse is *Edith*, which appeared in 1835 in the columns of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; though the *Nights*, which fol-

<sup>1</sup> Demogène, *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 646.

<sup>2</sup> "C'est dans le nuit brune

Sur un étoile jaun

La lune,

Comme un point ou un l...

Es tu l'œil du ciel borgne ?

Quel diablein cabot

Nous lorgne

Sous ton masque blafard ?

"N'est-ce pas qu'il est bête,

Qu'un grand faucheur bien gras,

Qui racle

Ses pattois et ses bras ?

Qui t'avait désigné

L'étoile nuit ? Toi-même

Cognois

A quelque chose pointu ?"

lowed soon after, contain, as do also his minor poems, many passages of exquisite beauty, which have secured to him a more than ephemeral fame. Rolla is half Faust, half Manfred—

“Of all the rakes in that city of the world  
In which license is the cheapest drug,  
The oldest in vice, and the most prolific—  
To wit, Paris—the greatest of rakes  
Was Jacques Rolla.”

Yet no ordinary *debauché*, for the heart of humanity stirred his own heart at its deepest ; and Rolla was not merely vicious, but he carried in his soul the Nemesis of his vice.

“He took three purses of gold, and for three years  
Lived in the sunlight, without dreaming of laws ;  
And never did child of Adam, beneath the sacred light,  
Display on earth, from the rising to the setting sun,  
A greater scorn of men and of laws.”<sup>1</sup>

But he was not completely happy in his enjoyment, for his mind had a Byronic background ; and he instinctively felt that, as soon as the cup of pleasure was exhausted, a terrible recompense would follow, and would be administered by his own hand. Now the poem takes a wider sweep : A den of infamy is before us, and its inhabitants are drawn with horrible fidelity, reminding one of similar descriptions of

<sup>1</sup> “ De tous les débauchés de la ville du monde  
Où le libertinage est à meilleur marché,  
De la plus vieille en vice et de la plus féconde,  
Je veux dire Paris—le plus grand débauché  
Était Jacques Rolla.  
Il prit trois bourses d’or, et, durant trois années,  
Il vécut au soleil sans se douter des lois ;  
Et jamais fils d’Adam, sous la sainte lumière,  
N’a, de l’est au couchant, promené sur la terre  
Un plus large mépris des peuples et des lois.”

Regnier. An innocent girl is asleep on her bed, "a girl of fifteen, almost a young woman ; . . . the small cherubim who watches over her soul doubts if he be her brother or her lover."<sup>1</sup> The mother sits by her side—the mother, wholly bad, the slave of poverty, and of him who has gold. The idea is dwelt upon in verses of infinite pathos, prolonged to the point of positive pain. The man and the gold are ready, and the bargain is made. It is Rolla, who with his last coins has purchased this last draught of worldly bliss. The time has come to which he has so long looked forward ; it is the penultimate throeb of his existence, and he has sworn that it shall be the deepest. The victim loves the betrayer—it is but part of the bargain ; and again the poet breaks out into exquisite pathos.

" Woman ! strange source whence joys and torture rise !  
Mysterious altar where, in sacrifice,  
We hear alternate prayers and blasphemies !  
Say in what echo, in what air reside,  
Those nameless words which through all ages bide,  
And, though but madness, yet five thousand years  
Have hung on lover's lips, and still be thine,"<sup>2</sup>

1 " Un enfant de quinze ans—peu—peu une jeune femme . . .  
Le petit cherubim qui veille sur son âme  
Doute s'il est son frère ou s'il est son amant . . .  
Si ce n'est pas ta mère, ô pauvre jeune fille,  
Quelle est donc cette femme assise à ton chevet  
Qui regarde l'enfance et l'air qui se penche,  
En secouant la tête et d'un air inquiet ?  
Qu'attend-elle si tard ?—Pour qui, et c'est ta mère,  
Son vœu-elle est-elle servit, depuis quelques instants,  
Ta porte et ton balcon . . . si ce n'est pour ton père ?  
Et ton père, Marie, est mort depuis longtemps—  
Pour qui dans des flammes, cette table fumante,  
Que de ses propres larmes elle veut se servir ?  
Pour qui dans ses flambées, et qui dans sa veur ?

2 " O femme ! strange abode of joys and of supplices !  
Mysterious altar, oh, dark as mystery,  
Or attendest thou to our blasphemies and prayers !



The cup is quaffed to the dregs ; the long soliloquy, face to face with death, comes to an end ; Rolla dies by the side of his mistress, without quailing, without hesitating for a moment in the accomplishment of his destiny. It is a sombre, pitiful, lurid picture—a picture which could not have been drawn in the eighteenth century, for lack of sufficient depth of passion, and by no one else in the nineteenth century, for lack of that very chaos of tenderness and ungentle strength which de Musset possessed. It is a picture revolting but startingly true to nature in most of its details, though not in the portraits of the hero and heroine ; and what is more, it is the work of a genuine poet.

A specimen of Alfred de Musset in a sad mood, bearing for its title *Sur une Morte* may interest the reader :—

“ She might be lovely, if the night  
Carved in some chapel's dark recess,  
By Buonarotti's chilling night,  
May claim the praise of loveliness.

“ Good was she, if it goodness reach  
To give an alms in passing by  
Without one feeling look or speech,  
If loveless gold be charity.

“ And she could think, if that you deem  
In soft and modulated tone  
To babble like a ceaseless stream ;  
Is proof of thought—else had she none.

“ She used to pray, if two fine eyes,  
Now coldly fastened on the ground,  
Now raised as coldly to the skies,  
Worthy the name of prayer be found.

Dis-moi, dans quel écho, dans quel air vivent-elles,  
Ces paroles sans nom, et pourtant éternelles,  
Qui ne sont qu'un délire, et depuis cinq mille ans  
Se suspendent encore aux lèvres des amants ?”

"She would have smiled, if blighted flower,  
That ne'er expanded to the sky,  
Could open to the general power  
Of winds that pass it heedless by.

"She might have wept, if, when there lay  
Her hand on what she called her heart,  
She e'er had felt that human clay  
Softened by dews the heavens impart.

"She might have loved, but selfish pride,  
Like lamps a useless light that hold,  
Standing the confined dead beside,  
Guarded her heart, so poor and cold.

"She's dead : she never lived : she stopped  
At seeming, seemed to live, though dead.  
The volume from her hand she dropped,  
From which no single word she read."

In the following verses, dated 1840, and called *Sadness*, de Musset depicts himself; and a lamentable picture it is :—

"Elle était belle, si la Nuit  
Qui dort dans les ombres chapelette,  
Où Michel-Auge a fait que lit,  
Immuable peut être belle.

"Elle était femme, s'il suffit  
Qu'en passant la main s'ouvre et donne,  
Sans que Dieu voit rien vu, rien dit ;  
Si l'oeil sans pitié voit l'écoulement.

"Elle pensait, si le sang bruit  
Traine tout dessous et sous-trait,  
Comme le ruisseau qui gemit,  
Peut être croire à la prière.

"Elle pleurt, si deux beaux yeux,  
Tantôt s'attachant à la terre,  
Tantôt se levant vers les cieux,  
Peuvent s'appeler la prière.

"Elle aurait souri, si la fleur  
Qui ne s'est point épanouie,  
Pourrait servir à la fraîcheur,  
Du vent qui passe et qui l'oublie.

"Elle aurait pleuré, si sa main,  
Sur son front tristement posée,  
Eût jamais dans l'orgueil humain  
Senti la caresse morte.

"Elle aurait aimé, si l'orgueil,  
Pareil à la lampe inutile  
Qu'on allume sans aucun conseil,  
N'eût voulu par son cœur étouffée.

"Elle est morte et n'a point vécu,  
Elle faisait semblant de vivre,  
De ses mains est tombé le livre,  
Dans lequel elle n'a rien lu."

"I have wasted my strength and my life ;  
And friends have left ; and my heart has died.  
I have no longer even the pride  
Which gave me fame in a worthless strife.

"Yet of old, long since, I thought to tread  
In the noble pathway of truth and right ;  
But when I saw where their footsteps led  
I swerved unequal to the sight.

"Now I see too late, they must prevail,  
And all who quit them can only fail  
Of all that's noble, great, and wise :

"God calls me ; and I have nought to say,  
Not a plea on which one hope to stay,  
Save that some tears have dimmed my eyes."<sup>1</sup>

Let us take him finally in a lighter mood. Here is the  
*Song of Fortunio*, from the *Chandelier* :—

"If you think I shall declare,  
Whose love I seek,  
Not for a kingdom could I dare  
Her name to speak.

"(But I will join you in a glee,  
If you think meet,  
That I adore—that fair is she  
As is the wheat.)

"I act but as her fantasy  
My will doth stir,  
And if she need my life, then I  
Can give it her.

<sup>1</sup>"J'ai perdu ma force et ma vie,  
Et mes amis et ma gaité :  
J'ai perdu jusqu' à la fierté,  
Qui faisait croire à mon génie,

"Quand j'ai connu la Vérité,  
J'ai cru que c'était une amie ;  
Quand je l'ai comprise et sentie,  
J'en étais déjà dégoûté.

"Et pourtant elle est éternelle  
Et ceux qui se sont passés d'elle  
Ici-bas ont tout ignoré.

"Dieu parle, il faut qu'on lui réponde,  
Le seul bien qui me reste au monde  
Est d'avoir quelquefois pleuré."

"The anguish that a love untold  
Makes us deplore,  
Within its grasp my heart must fold  
Till life is o'er.

"I love too deeply to declare  
Whose love I feel;  
And for my love, can die—but ne'er  
Her name reveal."<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the most brilliant exponent of satirical poetry after the Revolution of 1830 was Auguste Barbier.<sup>2</sup> Some men make revolutions, but of Barbier it may be said that the Revolution made him. It inspired him with vengeful strains full of wild patriotism, that have only been equalled by some portions of Victor Hugo's *Châtiments*. One should read *Les Jambes* to realise to what height of savage grandeur the French language can rise. These poems were published separately in 1830 in the *Revue de Paris*; the most conspicuous for beauty of form are *La Caricature*, *L'Emule*, and *La Popularité*. These satires, admirable in style as well as magnificent in inspiration, were immediately recognised as the work of a great poet. Unfortunately Auguste Barbier did not justify the hopes raised by this striking *début*; his second publication, *Il Parait*, is not comparable to *Les Jambes*. It may be that Barbier was unadapted for any other style of poetry than satire. For unaccount-

<sup>1</sup> "Si vous croyez que je vais dire  
Qui j'ose aimer,  
Je ne saurais, pour un empire,  
Vous le nommer.

" Nous allons chanter à la royauté,  
Si vous voulez,  
Que je l'adore et qu'elle est légitime  
Comme les vôtres.

<sup>2</sup> Je fais ce que me fantasme  
Veut m'écouter,

Et je pense, s'il lui faut un roi,  
La lui donner.

" Un mal qu'une amant ignore  
Nous fait souffrir,  
J'en parle l'air déclaré  
Jusqu'à mourir.

" Mais j'aime trop pour que je dise  
Qui j'ose aimer,

Et je vous raconte pour ma joie  
Sans la nommer."



able reasons, the satirist gave no further signs of life after the strains I have mentioned; and eventually he retired altogether from literature.

Sainte-Beuve,<sup>1</sup> who is chiefly known as a literary critic, and whom we shall meet in that capacity anon, wrote some poems, *Consolations*, when the writer was twenty-six years old; and published in 1837 *Thoughts in August*, which though not remarkable as triumphs of versification, are elegant and worthy of being read, the same delicate grace distinguishing their author as a poet which has earned him high fame as a writer of prose. He had already, in 1829, published a volume of elegiac poems under the pseudonym of Joseph Delorme, to whom he attributed them as posthumous remains. Emile Deschamps,<sup>2</sup> who was also a dramatist, wrote *French and Foreign Studies* in light and fluent verse; whilst his brother Antoni<sup>3</sup> is best known as the skilful and not ungraceful translator of Dante, and as the author of a volume of refined *Studies of Italy*, reminiscences of his sojourn for some years in the south of Italy. Théophile Gautier,<sup>4</sup> a writer of romances, voyages, and general essays, a literary, dramatic, and art critic, is also known for two or three volumes of spirited and graceful verse; *The Comedy of Death* (1838), and *Enamels and Cameos* (1852) amongst them. Let me quote, as a final example of the Romantic school, a few verses from a *terza rima* of Gautier's—

“From Sixtus’ fane when Michael Angelo  
His work completed radiant and sublime,  
The scaffold left and sought the streets below,

“Nor eyes nor arms would lower for a time;  
His feet knew not to walk upon the ground,  
Unused, to earth, so long in heavenly clime.

<sup>1</sup> 1804-1869.<sup>2</sup> 1791-1871.<sup>3</sup> 1800-1869.<sup>4</sup> 1811-1872.

"Upwards he gazed while three long months went round,  
So might an angel look who should adore  
The dread triangle mystery profound.

"My brother poets while their spirits soar  
In the world's ways at every moment trip,  
Walking in dreams while they the heavens explore."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Quand Michel-Ange eut peint la chapelle Sixtine,  
Et que de l'achèvement, soldates et artisans,  
Il fut descendu dans la nuit latine,

"Il ne pouvait baisser ni les bras ni les yeux :  
Ses pieds ne savaient pas comment marcher sur terre ;  
Il avait oublié le monde dans les cieux.

"Trois grands pics il garda cette attitude austère,  
On l'eût pris pour un ange en extase devant  
Le saint triangle d'or, au moment du mystère.

"Frère, voilà pourquoi les poètes, souvent,  
Buttent à chaque pas sur les chemins du monde :  
Les yeux levés au ciel, ils s'en vont en rêvant."

## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. THE IDEAS OF THE AGE.

WE have seen how completely the poetry and the history of the nineteenth century in France, as in every other country of Europe, are in contrast with the corresponding literary forms which were in vogue before the Revolution. Let us now push our inquiries farther afield, and amongst the critics, the philosophers, the dramatists, the novelists, the men of letters in general, endeavour to form a comprehensive notion of the new ideas of the age. For the literature of the Empire had revealed nothing more clearly than this—that new ideas were absolutely necessary if letters were to be redeemed from the degrading condition in which, like a horse in a mill, they had begun to move round and round upon their own path; still observing the worn-out classical forms, but apparently incapable, not to say contemptuous, of novelty in conception. The seventeenth century, the age of authority in literature, had been brilliant in the extreme; the eighteenth century, the age of scepticism, had also had a special brilliance of its own; the nineteenth century, destined to be the age of defiance, and, as a necessary consequence in literature, the most brilliant of the three, had barely revealed its character before the close of its first quarter. When Béranger had written his *Roi d'Yvetot*, de Musset his *Rolla*, Hugo his *Hernani*, Thiers and Guizot their first historical masterpieces, the present century may be said to have declared what it was to be for France and for

literature. In the light of subsequent history we can perceive that there had been premonitory symptoms at a much earlier date; and of course the turning-point between the past and present is not to be arbitrarily fixed at the turning-point of the century. It was at the Revolution that the forefathers of the present generation of Frenchmen committed themselves to a new world of facts and ideas; it was then that the current epoch of literature virtually and effectively began. We have seen it in the theatre, in Chénier, Ducis, and the great scenic interpreters. We have seen it in the revival of Christian devotion and art, in Chateaubriand and others. We have seen it in the invasion of foreign ideas and characters, in Madame de Staël, in the English romancer and the English poet of defiance.<sup>1</sup> The same influence, anterior in its source to the great nineteenth century poets and historians whom we have most recently been considering, but contemporaneous with them in its effects, may be distinctly traced in the writings of such men as Villemain and Sainte-Beuve, of Cousin, Comte, and Montalembert, of Balzac and George Sand.

## § 2. THE CRITICS.

The three famous lecturers of the Sorbonne, by whom the University of Paris revived under the Restoration all its ancient glories—Guizot, Villemain, and Cousin—were the head and front of the complex school of thought which inspired the timid governments of Louis XVIII and Charles X with so much alarm. Villemain<sup>2</sup> was in every way fitted to be an apostle of innovation. Himself purely classical in his training, in his intellectual bent and faculties, not inferior in point of style to the polished writers of the preceding century, he

<sup>1</sup> Scott and Byron.

<sup>2</sup> 1790-1869.



was at the same time essentially a man of the future rather than of the past ; bold in the acceptance as he was acute in the perception of the ideas which the Revolution had developed. He recognised without difficulty the Titanic birth which had resulted from the marriage of artistic Christianity with scientific infidelity : and instead of weakly starting back in horror at the portent, he saw, before the majority of his contemporaries, how incalculably the world might profit by what it certainly could not suppress. Burke in England, and perhaps Fontanes in France, were amongst those who saw the same thing, but regarded it in a different light. Villemain was disposed neither to imitate Burke in his passionate denunciations nor to assist Fontanes—whose pupil he had been—in a feeble opposition to the spirit of the age ; and the eagerness with which his lectures were heard, the enthusiasm with which they were praised,<sup>1</sup> sufficiently attested the harmony of his views with those of the mass of his countrymen.

Born at Paris in the first year of the Revolution, Abel-François Villemain was not of an age to commit himself politically before the Empire had made circumspection and patience a necessity. He devoted himself chiefly to literary studies ; and in 1812 his *Eulogy of Montaigne* was crowned by the Academy. The like honour was earned, at intervals of two years, by a discourse on *The Advantages and Inconveniences of Criticism*, and a *Eulogy of Montesquieu*. By these works he had attracted the favourable notice of the party which came into power with the Restoration ; and in 1816 he was appointed to the chair of literature at the University, which he occupied until his lectures were suspended, in common with those of Guizot and Cousin. For six years Villemain cautiously engaged himself in politics, and was appointed a *maître des requêtes*. As Professor he delivered the most suc-

<sup>1</sup> The *Globe* spoke of Villemain's lectures as "one of the most important intellectual events of the epoch."

cessful and brilliant lectures, of which those up to 1826 are lost, but those dating from that time were subsequently published as a *Course of French Literature: a Picture of the Eighteenth Century*. His popularity as a lecturer was great; for in addition to a vast store of information, clearly and harmoniously exposed, he had all the spirit and *verve* of a French orator, and the many points of his style were seized upon almost before they were uttered. It is impossible to read his literary judgments without being struck by his ardent love of beauty wherever he could find it, and by a serene independence and courage of thought, which rises superior both to national vanity and to the prevailing fashions of his day. There is no reason why I should not repeat the well-known story of one of Villemain's triumphs in his chair at the Sorbonne, which illustrates not only his command over his audience, but also the catholicity of his literary and human sympathy. It was at a time when the Turkish atrocities in Greece had made all Europe shudder with horror, and had enlisted Byron amongst many other foreign volunteers in the cause of the oppressed nationality. Villemain was comparing the *Iphigenia* of Euripides with that of Racine, to the advantage of the former. "In Racine's play," said the critic, "heroic manners are not painted in all their simplicity. Respect for modern etiquette is too often associated with the eloquent expression of passion: the language of love and the delicacies of gallantry, the very perfectness of diction and style seem, in spite of the seduction of the picture, to be at times little in harmony with the spirit of a subject which has for its *dénouement* the sacrifice of a human victim." Hereupon the lecturer translated one or two passages of the Greek play, by way of contrast, amidst the applause of his hearers. Feeling himself suddenly inspired by the contact of his literary theme with the pressing question of the day, Villemain broke out into a brief rhapsody:—"The Iphigenias of modern Greece will be

those Christian virgins drowned beneath the waves, who, in their fresh graves, already consecrated, are invoked under the name of virgin-martyrs ; the heroes which that country will celebrate shall be those venerable patriarchs, basely massacred, whose shrouds, torn to pieces and carried about over every part of Greece, have served as a talisman to the warriors of Samos and of Ispara."

In politics, whilst Villemain was distinctly Liberal in his tendencies, he was at the same time well balanced and moderate, so that he remained on fairly good terms with all the successive French Governments, from the first Empire to the second. Under Louis Philippe he was made a peer of France. At the Academy he had succeeded to the *fauteuil* of Fontanes as early as 1821, and in 1834 he was elected as its perpetual secretary. A life so prosperous, during a period of comparative peace and prosperity to France, afforded abundant leisure for the pursuit of Villemain's favourite studies. In literature he followed up his first *Course* with *Studies of Ancient and Foreign Literature* (1846), and *Select Studies on Modern Literature* (1857), to which must be added a number of miscellaneous essays on various literary and allied historical subjects.

The general spirit pervading the literary works of Villemain as a whole is comprised in the desire and the attempt to trace the origin of modern language and literature from the ancient classical source ; or rather, the origin of modern literature and language in France, in so far as these were due to the classical influence. He neglects the Teutonic ideas, save where he finds them already developed in England ; and even here he does not discriminate them from the neo-classical forms and developments of Western Europe in general. Hence his inquiries and their results are to this extent partial ; but partial rather in the scope of the critic than in his conclusions. He does not build on his facts and premisses as though he were building on something wider and firmer ; his

generalisations appear to be on the whole true and valuable, because he has known of how much his materials were capable. Moreover, his inductions are attained by so accurate a process, and so systematic a scale, that it becomes easy for those who are in possession of more materials to extend his generalisations and to enlarge his conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

A French critic observes :—

"From more than one point of view, the literary course of Villemain was the natural complement of the historical course of Guizot, and the philosophical course of Cousin. The same spirit of confidence in human reason animated these three courses : literary rationalism corresponded with historical rationalism and philosophical rationalism ; but, on the other hand, the same spiritual tendencies made themselves felt in all. Here and there in these lectures intruded a point of opposition, under the form of epigrams, brought in with so much art, and so carefully polished, that it was difficult in France, that *frondeur*, carping land in which everything is forgiven to wit, to show annoyance with a man who interested even those against whom he discharged his arrows. The pith of this course (Villemain's) was a broad spirit of independence, a deep perception of the beauties of the ancient genius added to a sincere admiration for intellectual power wherever it might be found. From Villemain's course, as from those of Guizot and Cousin, the young men of the age drew their supplies, with that worship of ideas which had its nobility even in its excesses, that self-reliance and that bold impartiality which spring from the comparison of literatures. It was thus that the lectures of the illustrious professor contributed to the movement which threw literature upon the path of innovations which his severe taste was bound for the most part to condemn, inasmuch as they rapidly tended to pass the limits of the true and of the beautiful."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Villemain also wrote a *Portrait of Christian Eloquence in the Fourth Century* (1842), *Studies in Modern History* (1846), a *History of Germany P.T.I.* (1852), etc.

<sup>2</sup> A. Sattlement, *Histoire de la littérature française sous la Restauration*, vol. ii. p. 378.



Amongst the distinctively literary critics who earned their first celebrity in the pages of a newspaper, and of whom several have obtained a more than journalistic fame, none is more eminent than Sainte-Beuve,<sup>1</sup> whom we have already encountered in the *Cénacle* of Victor Hugo. Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve was born at Boulogne, and began to study for the medical profession, but soon discovered that his forte lay in historical and literary criticism. He was little more than twenty when, after taking up his residence in Paris, he found himself an intimate associate of the romantic school of poets, and a contributor to the *Globe*. Like many another man of genius, whose prose was destined to delight his contemporaries, Sainte-Beuve began by thinking that poetry was the special form in which it behoved him to cast his thoughts. Of his poems we have already spoken. The measure of his critical faculty may be taken in a work published in 1828, which is one of the most remarkable, if not the most brilliant and caustic, of all that he has written. This was a *Historical and Critical Sketch of French Poetry in the Sixteenth Century*, a work of great perspicacity, dealing in a fresh and vigorous style with the age of Ronsard and the Pléiade. Sainte-Beuve treats the school of Ronsard and du Bellay in an original manner, and has something more in view than merely to describe and to criticise it. The founders of the Pléiade, it will be remembered, assumed to themselves the task of reforming and re-integrating the French language; they prided themselves on restoring French to the level of classical tongues, not by servile imitation of the ancient Greek and Latin, but by asserting and illustrating the independence of the national idiom, and proving its sufficiency for the expression of a lofty poetic literature. Sainte-Beuve records the attempt and the comparative failure of the Pléiade; and then he strikes out for

<sup>1</sup> 1804-1869.

himself the new line of criticism which constitutes the originality of his work. He regrets the failure of Ronsard and his friends; he follows the argument of Joachim du Bellay in his *Defence and Illustration of the French Tongue*, and counsels his own age to take up the task where the poets of the sixteenth century had left it, and to renew the French tongue and the French literature in the form which they had sought to give it. He believed moreover—and with some reason—that his own generation had already begun to go back upon the ancient school of poetry, especially in the matter of rhythm and the arts of composition. "As for the forms of speech and language, there was loss whereby we might profit in our old poets. The English and Italians, in order to renovate their tongue, have only to carry it up to the primitive sources of Shakspeare and of Dante; but we have lacked these vast sacred lakes in reserve against the day of regeneration, and we have had to draw from the present and from ourselves. Yet if we recall certain pages of the *Illustration* of Joachim du Bellay, certain sparkling passages of Mademoiselle de Gournay, of d'Aubigné, and of Regnier, if we picture that bold and careless fashion of style, without rule or examples, which proceeds at hazard as the thought may direct it, we shall find in these a few general points of resemblance with the manner which tends to prevail in our own days."<sup>1</sup>

The idea broached by Sainte-Beuve is, it must be confessed, a little vague; and there is not much to be said for the critical strength at this period of his career, of a man who would abandon the style of Corneille, Molière, La Fontaine, and Voltaire, to return to Ronsard, or even to d'Aubigné. Not that this bare statement exhausts all that Sainte-Beuve intended to recommend, or suggests all that is really valuable in his advice. It is impossible that any language, at any

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 178.

phase of its existence, can do itself justice without constantly turning back for nourishment upon its former self. In so far as the young critic persuaded his readers to compare and strengthen their style by reference to the sixteenth century, he undoubtedly did a useful thing. The freshness and suppleness of d'Aubigné, for instance, were certainly capable of being imitated with good effect by those who had been trained in the stiff courtly forms of the eighteenth century ; and in this respect Sainte-Beuve's work had a good influence on his generation. He himself set the example of carrying the use of the archaisms which he commended to the point of exaggeration, and his style, especially in the elegiac verses to which reference has been made, is antiquated in the extreme. He lived to throw off much of this juvenile affectation ; and his riper style is on the whole a happy one. For the rest, the romantic school of French poetry, of which Sainte-Beuve made himself the du Bellay, has a greater affinity with the poetry of Villon and Marot, and of the Pléiade—which, as I have ventured to assert, was more in harmony with Villon and Marot than Ronsard was willing to admit—than it is with the poetry of any which succeeded them. Sainte-Beuve exaggerated, no doubt ; but he exaggerated a useful idea, and he deserves to be regarded as one of the apostles of the new literature of France.

As a literary critic, pure and simple,—and this must always be Sainte-Beuve's best title to esteem,—he was bold, independent, and nothing if not pungent, hiding this pungency often under an appearance of bonhomie. "The critical spirit," he himself says in his *Thoughts*, the volume which came next in order after the poems of Joseph Delorme, "is by nature facile, sinuous, ready of movement, and comprehensive ;" and in fact, nothing strikes us more forcibly in the collected works of Sainte-Beuve than the catholicity and many-sidedness of his mind, the excessive mobility and freedom of his

judgment. His *Literary Portraits* and *Contemporary Portraits* bear witness not only to enthusiasm, hero-worship, and dogmatism, but also to a generous attachment to the principles which he had adopted, and to his freedom from conventionality, and his superiority to merely traditional judgments. His critical estimates frequently made a sensation amongst the reading public, in so many respects were they opposed to what had hitherto been the received opinions of literary men. More than once Sainte-Beuve gave offence by attempting to reverse the judgment of posterity upon a man who seemed to have been unduly praised or blamed; but as a rule he drew the majority of his readers with him. Subsequent criticism has by no means always ratified his conclusions; thus, in his adverse judgment of Jean Baptiste Rousseau, for which Chateaubriand openly reproached him, and Royer-Collard no less openly applauded him, I imagine that the preponderating opinion of the present day would side with Chateaubriand. Sainte-Beuve himself came to admit the invalidity of some of his earlier criticisms; his *Causeries de Lundi*, written from 1849 until 1869, and republished afterwards in volumes with additions, contain more than one or two expressions of regret for the occasional hypercriticism of his *Portraits*. The toil which he took to produce these *Causeries* was very great. "Assisted by a secretary, Sainte-Beuve began every Monday morning to prepare the article for the following week. Having selected his subject, to which he had often given much reflection, and which he had often treated in another form, he dictated a rough outline of the article, filling in blanks, and making additions, with his own hand. This first draft was then copied, revised, and sometimes written over again. For twelve hours daily, from Monday to Thursday, he laboured in his study, refusing to receive visitors or to be interrupted in any way, and taking no relaxation till the evening. By



Friday the manuscript was ready for the printer, and on that day Sainte-Beuve went and read over what he had composed to Dr. Véron (first proprietor of the *Revue de Paris* and then of the *Constitutionnel*), whose judgment he valued for a reason resembling that which induced Molière to respect the verdict of his old housekeeper. After profiting by Dr. Véron's suggestions or objections, he had the article put in type ; after the proof had been subjected to a revision as minute and searching as that which the manuscript had undergone, it was pronounced ready for publication on Monday. When it did appear, the accuracy and aptness of every quotation, the correctness of every name and date, were as noteworthy as its general finish and effect as a whole. Very seldom are newspaper articles as worthy of preservation as the *Causeries du Lundi*, nor is it the rule, perhaps, for contributors of literary articles to newspapers, even if endowed with Sainte-Beuve's talent, to possess in equal measure his capacity for taking pains."<sup>1</sup>

His early inclination to laud was the natural price which Sainte-Beuve had to pay for his too eager partisanship with the romantic school, and also, it must be confessed, for his constant strain after originality and speciality. His able biographer, M. Jules Levallois,<sup>2</sup> aptly says of him : "He was concerned with individuals, not with ideas. General theories as such repel him when they do not alarm him ; but if he must invent a formula in order to explain, to render accessible and popular the talent of any prominent individual under whose charm he is for the time being, we shall see that he discovers it with a rare decision, expounds a complete system with a marvellous lucidity, supported, if need be, by the most abstract argument. It is the poetry of the *Cénacle*, of Emile

<sup>1</sup> I have taken these lines from Mr. W. F. Rae's appreciative introductory chapter on Sainte-Beuve's Life and Writings, prefixed to his *English Portraits*.

<sup>2</sup> *Sainte-Beuve : La Méthode du Critique*, p. 62.

and Antoni Deschamps, of de Vigny, of Victor Hugo, which he in the first instance supported, propagated, formulated, far more than his own: I mean that towards which his instincts carried him. Throughout his life, but more particularly in his youth, his poetry and aesthetics were those of his connections and of his friendships."

But Sainte-Beuve was not always laudatory, and his articles sent anonymously to the *Revue Suisse* during 1843 and the two following years, and only published with his name last year (1876),<sup>1</sup> abundantly prove this. Thus he attacks Lamennais on account of his book, *Aeschylus and Euripides*, Lamartine, Chateaubriand,<sup>2</sup> Victor Hugo,<sup>3</sup> the Ultramontanes, Magnin, Sue, de Genoude, Balzac, Gozlan, J. Janin, and many others, and this sometimes openly, but also sometimes by fastening on the unfortunate man whom he criticises an adjective, a phrase, and even now and then an ironical compliment, which will stick to him. He calls Guizot "a professor of history;" Cousin "a professor of philosophy," and "the most eloquent of sophists, in the ancient and favourable sense of the word," and "Villemain the most eloquent rhetorician," in the most favourable sense also. And even the ladies come in for their share. Madame Collet, Madame Sand, Madame de Girardin, Madame Benjamin Constant, of whom he says that "she is still a shepherdess, even at the age of seventy-two,"<sup>4</sup> receive from time to time

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *Chronique de France*.

<sup>2</sup> "M. de Chateaubriand, le grand écrivain, comme disent les journaux anglais, est l'âme en son français le plus barbare . . . à vanité de la gloire humaine! Cela s'appelle être à la fois seigneur du château de lauriers et maître du bûcher de crotin." *Chronique* of the 24. et 25. December 1843.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Chroniques* of March 18, and March 20 and 29, 1846, Sainte-Beuve attacks the *Burquois*, and says, "Le maître politique de Victor Hugo a été toute une révolution. Quant au cosmogonicien on s'en fait facilement le balais-pierre; je me flatte de n'en avoir été que le Vergniaud. *Bourgeois* a été pour moi la 56 de l'Assemblée législative."

<sup>4</sup> *Chronique France*, August 27th, 1843.

some sarcastic notice. Yet, in spite of all that Sainte-Beuve had written or done, to him may be justly applied the words which he himself wrote of Villemain: "Villemain (Sainte-Beuve) does not love nor feel directly either religion, philosophy, poetry, arts, or nature. What does he love then? He loves *literature*, and, through it, everything."

Sainte-Beuve, whose grandmother was an Englishwoman, was intimately acquainted with English literature, and "had read and admired the works of the greatest English poets, and also those of Pope and Goldsmith, Cowper, Bowles, Charles Lamb, Coleridge, and Wordsworth," on some of whom he wrote very appreciative essays. He became a member of the French Academy in 1845, being at that time engaged upon a *History of Port-Royal*, an interesting but rather discursive work, which employed him until the year 1848. He was appointed Professor of Latin Poetry at the Collège de France in 1854, but the students refused to listen to his lectures on account of political animosity. He then became Professor at the Normal School, and resigned at the end of four years, and resumed his connection with the *Constitutionnel*. He was nominated a Senator of the Second Empire in 1865, and his accepting such a post has been blamed by many; even there, however, he always vindicated the dignity and freedom of letters. He was not the only one of the new school of criticism who at the same time owed allegiance to the new historical school. Vitet,<sup>1</sup> another of the contributors to the *Globe*, is honourably known for his trilogy on the epoch of the Ligue, which he elucidated in his *Barricades* (1826), the *States of Blois*, and the *Death of Henry III.* Vitet trusted for his materials almost entirely to contemporary documents and pamphlets, receiving little at second-hand from the historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and the pamphlets of which he avails himself most willingly are those of Huguenot

<sup>1</sup> 1802-1873.

writers. The result is a very interesting and detailed, but at the same time a somewhat one-sided narrative. As a literary historian, dominated by the march of the new ideas of the century, Napoleon-Désiré Nisard,<sup>1</sup> who succeeded Villemain in his professorship, is a writer of great elegance and of painstaking accuracy. His principal works, most of which were published before 1848, are a volume on the *Latin Poets of the Decadence*, an *Abstract of the History of French Literature*, and a fuller *History of Literature*, the publication whereof occupied him during the last five years of Louis Philippe's reign. Jean-Jacques Ampère<sup>2</sup> also takes worthily his place among the splendid array of literary critics of the reign of Louis Philippe. Already, at an early age, he had given proofs of literary genius, worked hard at the study of English and German, and, after a long sojourn in Italy, accepted a chair of Scandinavian poetry at Marseilles, which he only occupied for a short time, and became in 1833 professor of the History of French Literature at the Collège de France. About nine years later he was elected member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres, and in 1847 member of the French Academy. He wrote several books of travel and literary essays, but is best known as an historian by his erudite *Literary History of France before the twelfth century*, to which the author of this present book is under great obligations; a *Roman History at Rome*, published in 1851, and the three following years; and *The Roman Empire at Rome*, which appeared after Ampère's death. On these and on his other works, a very able English critic remarks: "His six volumes of Roman history, while presenting a mine of knowledge from which handbook makers will ever dig, have a flow of style seldom combined, except in the highest names, with the same depth of erudition. These, and his careful contributions to the history of various literatures, will live, while the

<sup>1</sup> 1866.

<sup>2</sup> 1808-1884.



repute of his lighter works, the chief charm of which consisted in their being so like his own conversation, is already passing away with the contemporaries who enjoyed them. Tocqueville's eulogy to the Comte de Circourt on the charm of Ampère's society is significant: '*Le moindre mérite de cet auteur-là est celui d'écrire.*'"<sup>1</sup>

Last on our list of historians stands Alexis de Tocqueville,<sup>2</sup> who, at an early age, was sent with M. de Beaumont<sup>3</sup> to the United States, in order to study the prison-system there. On their return, they published in 1832 the result of their observations, under the title, *The Penitentiary System in the United States, and its Application to France*, which was a strong plea in favour of the cellular system as practised in Philadelphia, namely, perfect isolation of the prisoner by night as well as by day. Three years later de Tocqueville published the first part of his *Democracy in America*, of which the second part appeared in 1840. This book produced a great sensation, and founded, as it were, a new political school, having for its aim individual liberty and decentralisation. In the beginning of this work de Tocqueville investigates the mechanism of the only government which, according to him, has conciliated true liberty with true equality, to wit, the United States; whilst in the second, taking a wider range of his subject, he endeavours to discover what influence the democratic principle can have on the intellect, the feelings, and the morals; and ends by some chapters on the kind of despotism which democratic nations have to fear. He arrives at the conclusion that the future belongs to democracy, shows that the individual is isolated and helpless against the State, and that there is no other safeguard against the dangers of equality but the development of liberty, the emancipation of the commune, the formation,

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, January 1876: *The Two Ampères*.

<sup>2</sup> 1805-1859.

<sup>3</sup> 1802-1866.

by election and association, of strong, powerful, and rich corporations, barriers against the oppression of the State; and finally, the freedom of the press, which is "*par excellence* the democratic instrument of liberty." What crimes might have been prevented if de Tocqueville's advice had been followed!

In 1841 de Tocqueville was chosen member of the French Academy, was several times elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies, wrote in favour of the abolition of slavery, of free-trade, and on certain other liberal projects; published in 1856 his book, *The Ancient Regime and the Revolution*, in which he clearly proved that the Revolution was prepared and caused by the state of society which preceded it, and that all the changes which are commonly said to have resulted from it—such as administrative centralisation, supremacy and tyranny of the government officers, multiplicity of offices, conscription, preponderance of Paris, and extreme subdivision of property—existed already under the ancient regime. Hence it arose, that when the two great causes of the Revolution were at work, the desire for equality and the desire for liberty, the first was easily and completely established, whilst the latter was not. De Tocqueville was at work on the other parts of his work, in which he intended to describe the consequences of the Revolution, the Empire, and Napoleon I., when he died, admired and respected by all, at the age of fifty-four.

## § 3. THE PHILOSOPHERS.

Let us see what share Victor Cousin<sup>1</sup> had in the task of inoculating his generation in the fundamental ideas of this new liberty, based upon the supremacy of reason and the independence of thought:—we may naturally expect to find the influence of the philosophical innovator greater even than that of the historical or literary innovator. Cousin, like Villemain, whose junior he was by about a year, was born at Paris, and, like Villemain, he distinguished himself in the public competitions which have done so much to nurse the genius of distinguished Frenchmen, almost before he came to man's estate, A pupil of Royer-Collard,<sup>2</sup> in 1810 he carried off the prize for rhetoric, and four years later was appointed *maître des conférences* in philosophy. On the death of his master, in 1815, being then only four-and-twenty years old, he succeeded to the post of professor at the Sorbonne, where for a time he did his best to strike new sparks out of the old and well-worn flints which had served the turn of Royer-Collard. German ideas, upon the introduction of Madame de Staël in the first instance, were soon added to the Scotch ideas of Reid and his school; but it is not too much to say that during the earlier years of Cousin's professorship he had no definite philosophical system to work upon. Both before and after the suspension of the Sorbonne lectures,<sup>3</sup> the young professor devoted much of his time to classical studies, and brought out editions of Proclus and Plato, as well as an edition of Descartes. In 1824 he passed some time in Germany; and being suspected

<sup>1</sup> 1791-1876.

<sup>2</sup> He had also studied under Maine de Biran.

<sup>3</sup> In 1825.

of having dealings with the secret political societies in Prussia, which were being carefully watched by the Prussian government, he was arrested and thrown into prison. His detention was not a long one; and he brought back with him to France a distinct philological conception, as well as a certain prestige of persecution. The ideas which Cousin seems to have entertained at this period, and to which he more or less adhered throughout his life, may be sketched in a few words.

There are two general and necessary laws, comprehending all others: the law of substance and the law of causality. Even these two are but one law under different aspects; for substance or matter is but actual causality or force, and force is but active matter. Cause is but substance revealing itself: the human mind is superior to substance—and therefore to cause. Observe the dignity accorded to humanity. A human being is a personality, exercising a free will; capable of directing causes, because he is capable of controlling matter. Humanity is in fact deified: it is the one grand philosophic idea of the nineteenth century; and at an interval of fifty years we can see that Victor Cousin was at least on the path which his successors have been constrained to follow. How then, and to what extent, is humanity the controlling deity of matter? and in what sense can it be admitted that human reason is itself subject to control? Cousin asks and answers the question. The reason of the individual is fallible; pure reason is infallible. It is not reflection, but intuition, antecedent to reflection, which lays its grasp upon essential truths, and is supreme, absolute, and above control. In these ideas we may recognise the influence of Reid as well as of Kant; and the essential weaknesses of each are revealed in their pupil. See, only by way of illustration, how Cousin attempted to reconcile the discrepancies of the Scotchman and the German.



Speaking of the phase through which he was then passing, he says—

“More than ever faithful to the psychological method, instead of abandoning observation, I clung to it with increased force ; and it is by observation that, in my innermost consciousness, to a degree to which Kant had not penetrated, under the relativity and apparent subjectivity of necessary principles, I reached and brought to light the instantaneous but real fact of the spontaneous perception of truth, a perception which, without being itself directly reflected, passes unperceived into the depths of the consciousness, but is there the true basis of that which afterwards, under a logical form and by the operation of reflection, becomes a necessary conception. All subjectivity and all relativity vanish in the spontaneity of perception. Reason becomes truly subjective by its relation to the free and will-exerting *I*, the seat and the type of all subjectivity ; but in itself it is impersonal ; it belongs no more to any one *I* of humanity than to any other, and its laws spring from itself alone.”

Had God, then, no place in Cousin's system ?—

“The God of the consciousness is not an abstract God, a solitary King relegated beyond creation to a throne of silent eternity and absolute existence, which resembles the very annihilation of existence. He is a God at once true and real, at once substance and cause, always substance and always cause—substance only in so far as He is cause, and cause only in so far as He is substance ; in other words, absolute cause, one and many, eternity and time, space and number, essence and life, individuality and totality, principle, end and means, at the summit of being and at its lowest link, infinite and finite at once ; threefold moreover, to wit, God, nature, and humanity.”

No wonder the government of the Charter,<sup>1</sup> which had proclaimed a state religion, a government which clung to that religion as indissolubly associated with the principle of monarchy, and which clearly perceived—as all French mon-

<sup>1</sup> Of 1814.

archical governments since the Revolution have perceived—that it could continue to exist only by the stern exercise of absolute authority—had recourse to the extreme measure of suspending the lectures of a man who taught what seemed to be simple pantheism. The founder of the modern French eclectic school of philosophy seems to have taken this prohibition rather as a relief; and for a few years he paid little heed to the expostulations of his would-be disciples, who saw their master turning to the recreation of history when they would fain have heard him promulgating absolute laws. But Cousin was no dogmatist; it was indeed part of his vocation to protest against dogmatism, as being ruinous of all genuine philosophy. “The mistake of philosophy,” he told his friends, in 1826,<sup>1</sup> “is to have considered only one side of thought, and to have seen it fully only upon this side. There is no false system, but many incomplete, true enough in themselves, but vicious in the pretence that they contain each the absolute truth, which is to be found only in them all. The incomplete, and consequently the exclusive—this is the mistake of philosophy, or, it should rather be said, of philosophers; for philosophy dominates all systems; it crosses all and rests in none. A lover of reality, it completes its picture with features borrowed from each system; for, once again, each system contains the reality within itself; but, unfortunately, it reflects it only from a single facet.” The true leader of men is not less enthusiastic than his followers, though he knows how to be more patient; and if there are moments when he seems less inclined to action—whether he produces an edition of Proclus or fells trees on his private estate—it is only because he perceives that the building up of a system depends on times and opportunities, as well as on impetuosity and action. On the resumption of his lectures in 1828 and 1829, Cousin vindicated his short silence by delivering an

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Fragments.*

exhaustive criticism of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, and by pushing into every age and every country his researches into the history of philosophy.

Cousin was admitted to the Academy in 1830, on the death of Fourier. In his historical studies, half biographical and half literary, he displayed a special liking for reminiscences of the seventeenth century, wherefrom he culled the memories of several of its most distinguished women—Jacqueline Pascal, the Duchess de Longueville, Madame de Sablé, Madame de Chevreuse, and Madame de Hautefort. His last works were on *French Society in the Seventeenth Century, according to the Grand Cyrus of Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, and on *The Youth of Mazarin*.

A more direct inheritor of the views of Royer-Collard was his pupil, editor and biographer, Théodore Jouffroy,<sup>1</sup> who, though but nineteen years old when his master died, was already known as an able dialectician, formed distinctly in the Scotch school. Jouffroy's training had been a religious one, at the same time that his father had carefully nourished him in the ideas of 1789. Born in the Franche-Comté, he came up to Paris at an early age, and at once took his place in the first rank of the class of philosophy. He not only formed a warm attachment to Royer-Collard, but also adopted from him the principles of Thomas Reid, to which he adhered for the remainder of his life. During a few years he was influenced by the ardent spirit of Victor Cousin; but in point of fact he was himself the more ardent, and by far the more adventurous thinker of the two, and Cousin's moderate eclecticism did not satisfy the impatient mind of Jouffroy. It was he who, in the columns of the *Globe*, made himself the spokesman of the advanced section of intellectual Paris, in expressing the disappointment which was felt at Victor Cousin's apparent unwillingness, in 1825, to push forward

<sup>1</sup> 1790-1842.

his reconnaissances into the domains of orthodoxy. Despairing of finding a leader on the path which alone, as he thought, could lead to signal triumphs, and not himself precisely of the stuff whereof intellectual leaders are made, Jouffroy fell back upon the self-contemplative and purely psychological process which his first master had enjoined. To watch the method of thought in the individual—that is, in himself—and to induce herefrom the general and necessary laws of thought: this was theoretically the position assumed by Jouffroy. Cousin's idea of a personified humanity, necessarily infallible in the aggregate, and necessarily fallible in the individual, was never sufficiently grasped by his younger friend; nor does the still more striking idea of spontaneous perception and deferred reflexion appear to have sunk into Jouffroy's mind. He sought to discover humanity in himself, as Cousin sought himself in humanity. In his preface to a translation of Stewart's *Moral Philosophy* (1826) Jouffroy explains the intellectual condition of the philosopher, as he conceived it.

"It is not enough to know how to observe; we must in addition have the courage to perceive in determined facts only that which is, and to draw from them only such inductions as rigorously follow from them; we must not keep in our heads a crowd of questions which we are impatient to solve, and which we desire to solve in a particular manner: we must not, in order to satisfy our impatience and to justify our opinion, extort from facts, by the subtlety of imagination, solutions which we require, and which they do not provide: we ought to be wise enough to understand that the best means of solving problems of fact in a solid manner is to forget these questions in the observation of facts, so that we may be able to state these impartially and completely."

It is the position, and to some extent the partial scientific method of Descartes; but at all events Jouffroy does not



approach more nearly to a practical method than did Descartes before him. Jouffroy worked in a circle, on the hither-side of a practical solution; whereas Victor Cousin founded at least a tower of observation which commanded, as he believed, a serviceable outlook over the field of humanity—a belief in which the nineteenth century has been much disposed to justify him.

Less known, perhaps, to succeeding generations than either Cousin or Jouffroy was Maine de Biran,<sup>1</sup> a disciple of Condillac, though with a decided tendency towards materialism. In 1805 he broke decidedly with the school in which he had been trained, and more or less heartily adopted the ideas of Royer-Collard, whom in fact he had anticipated in his objection to the views of his first teacher. Royer-Collard declared that Maine de Biran was “the master of all of us;” whilst Victor Cousin himself called him “the first metaphysician of our time.” His complete works have never yet been published, and his executors have been so far unjust to him that posterity is not able to ratify of its own knowledge the high praise bestowed on him by his contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> He seems, however, to have taken an eager interest in the progress of the philosophical research of his age, commenting regularly upon the published opinions of the greatest thinkers of the day. His *Journal Intime* contains many acute and interesting notes on Bonald’s *Philosophical Researches*, on Lamennais’ *Essay on Indifference*, and on such works as those of Droz,<sup>3</sup> Laromiguière,<sup>4</sup> and Bérard.<sup>5</sup> Amongst the earlier French philosophers of the nineteenth century, we must not omit to take note of the bolder professors of pure materialism and systematic scepticism, the direct inheritors of Holbach and the more outspoken champions of infidelity of the

<sup>1</sup> 1766-1824.

<sup>2</sup> See Nettement, *Histoire de la littérature française*, vol. ii. p. 349.

<sup>3</sup> 1773-1850.

<sup>4</sup> 1756-1837.

<sup>5</sup> 1789-1828.

Revolution. Destutt de Tracy<sup>1</sup> developed Condillac in his *Elements of Ideology*; Broussais<sup>2</sup> violently attacked the eclectics in his essay on *Irritation and Folly*; Charles Fourier<sup>3</sup> advanced some crude theories, which were known by the general title of *Social Mechanics*; Saint Simon<sup>4</sup> set up his counter-scheme of Christianity upon the "rehabilitation of the flesh," and further developed a scheme of socialism. Shortly before his death he founded a journal called the *Producteur*, devoted to industrial topics and interests, which had amongst its earliest contributors Auguste Comte,<sup>5</sup> Augustin Thierry,<sup>6</sup> Rodrigue,<sup>7</sup> Enfantin,<sup>8</sup> and others.

<sup>1</sup> 1754-1826.<sup>2</sup> 1772-1838.<sup>3</sup> 1772-1827.<sup>4</sup> 1760-1825.<sup>5</sup> 1798-1857.<sup>6</sup> 1795-1856.<sup>7</sup> 1794-1850.<sup>8</sup> 1796-1864.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. THE NOVELISTS.

BEFORE we pass on to consider more particularly the novel-writers of the reign of Louis Philippe, it may be well to glance at the condition of the romance during the earlier Restoration period, and up to the time when Victor Hugo, Dumas, Balzac, Soulié, Eugène Sue, occupied the first rank among French novelists. A reader of fiction in the third decade of the century would be able to turn to such works as the *Martyrs*, *René*, the *Natchez* of Chateaubriand, *Delphine* and *Corinne*, by Madame de Staël; *Adolphe*, by Benjamin Constant; the *Painter of Salzburg*, by Charles Nodier, not to mention such old and well-known tales as the *Gil Blas*, by Le Sage, *Manon Lescaut*, by the abbé Prévost, or the translations of *Faust*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Tristram Shandy*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the romances of Walter Scott, of Hoffmann, and Richter. The vapid novels and poems of d'Arlincourt were still read; and he had a host of imitators, especially women. The English Mrs. Radcliffe had numerous counterparts in France, who combined the amorous and the mysterious, the chivalric and the sombre, in a fashion much approved by the most serious division of the novel-reading public. Such were Madame de Montolieu, with her *Saint Clair of the Isles*, Madame de Saint-Surin with *Opinion and Love*, Madame Bastide with *Last Love*, Madame Voïart with *The Wife or the Six Loves*. In addition to these, and more

general in the character of their fiction, we encounter Madame de Batz with *Leopold*, Madame Barthélemy-Hadot with *Ernest de Vendôme*, Madame Guénard with *The Man with the Iron Mask*, Madame Allard de Thérèse with *Gertrude*, Madame de Bou with *The Apparition*, Madame de Beaulieu with *Genevieve in the Woods*, Mademoiselle Deleyre, and a score more of ingenious but dreary feminine novelists. Of male writers (I speak of their sex rather than of their genius) another score might be named, who shone in the absence of master-hands. In the second class of novelists, but on a level inferior to that of Bayle, de Latouche, and Mérimée, I may mention Paul de Kock, whose numerous works are nearly all alike, but do not describe badly the *grisette*, as he imagined her; Horace Raisson, a collaborateur of Balzac in the latter's first stage; Raban, the author of *Suzette*, and Angelot, who wrote *The Man of the World*. More than one or two of these were honoured by a seat in the Academy, though for better reason, as a rule, than could be found in their works of fiction.

The literary Renaissance of 1830 was, after the seventeenth century, the richest epoch of the history of French Literature. In variety of intellectual production and for originality of expression, it was certainly the best. As we have already seen, history was brilliantly represented by Michelet, Louis Blanc, Guizot, Mignet; philosophy had lofty and profound exponents in Cousin, Royer-Collard, and others too numerous to name. Victor Hugo, Dumas, and others, carried the drama into spheres hitherto unknown; but no department was more remarkable for brilliancy and extent of production than the novel. After the giant Balzac, whose works were received with some of the coldness which usually greets innovators of all descriptions, came a host of adepts. It would be a thankless task to expatiate on the merits of the numerous phalanx who distinguished themselves then in the realm of fiction; some, like Alfred de Vigny, Stendhal,



and Théophile Gautier, exercised their pen on other subjects ; others, like de Latouche, Madame de Girardin, and Léon Gozlan, followed in the wake of the masters. We will not attempt to assign them an order of merit ; each has his own bent and peculiar style ; and a comparison between geniuses so different, albeit that they have tilled the same ground, would hardly lead to satisfactory results. •

In his historical romance of *Cinq Mars*, de Vigny, writing in the epoch of popular emancipation, had recourse for his subject to the epoch when royalty, having thrown off the trammels of feudalism, had begun to exercise supreme authority in France. A liberated nation, strong in its newly-acquired independence, seized with avidity on a picture which presented so striking a contrast between their present and their past. It was entirely a new *genre* of fiction which de Vigny had introduced—being himself, no doubt, under the influence of Sir Walter Scott ; and he knew how to render it doubly acceptable to an audience which was, be it remembered, very different from the audience of Voltaire and Rousseau : a people in place of a class, a democracy in place of a court, greedy of new ideas, ever on the watch for something to satisfy their pride, their self-esteem, their curiosity, and not easily pleased with any writer who did not lay himself out to give them such satisfaction. De Vigny did this. He painted for them a king, Louis XIII., under the thumb of his subject Richelieu ; a royal prince, Gaston d'Orléans, alternately plotting against and cringing to a haughty minister ; a marshal, de Bassompierre, acting the part of a fatuous and ridiculous courtier ; whilst the approaching and inevitable sovereignty of the people is skilfully foreshadowed by the author, who, respectable as was his attempt to surround his characters by local colouring and historical fact, undoubtedly has the nineteenth century more frequently before him than the seventeenth. But it is naturally in the successors of de

Vigny more than in de Vigny himself that we must look for evidence that both the writers and the readers of the new world were separated by a wide gulf of thought and experience from those who died before the Revolution. For de Vigny was not by inclination and choice, far less professedly, a member of the new school; though he was certainly allied to it by his talent and wit, and by the accident which made him an imitator of Sir Walter Scott. His *Stello*, in which he tries to prove that poets are predestined to die of hunger, and his *Tales of Military Service and Grandeur*, in which honour is glorified, are well written, but full of exaggeration.

There were two distinct classes of individuals by whom the new ideas of the nineteenth century were impressed upon the Frenchmen of the Restoration and the succeeding epoch: first the historians, philosophers, scholars, and men of science, the legitimate inheritors of the eighteenth century, and who pushed forward from the point at which the Revolution had interrupted the general course of discovery and criticism; next the poets, the novelists, the dramatists, the men of imagination, children of reaction rather than of study, who wrote for the heart rather than for the head, who recognised the need of the multitude for amusement, whose fancy ran riot in the freedom of humanity and of human thought. Of these latter, the novelists were the most characteristic, the most brilliant, perhaps the most original: and of the novelists none was more genuinely a type of the romantic school than Prosper Mérimée.<sup>1</sup> Born at Paris, the son of a distinguished painter and savant, Mérimée was a man of letters from his boyhood. He was barely twenty-two when he published *The Drama of Clara Gazul, a Spanish Actress*, which, of course, were not Spanish; and within a few years he betrayed the gradual settling of his mind in its destined groove by the production of *La Gazula, a selection of Illyrina Poetry* (1827).

which were again poems from a pretended foreign source, but really written by Mérimée himself; the *Jacquerie, Scenes of Feudalism* (1828), the *Chronicle of the reign of Charles IX.* (1829), and *Mosaic*, a collection of stories (1833). In historical romance his best tale is *The Carrying of the Redoubt*, very short but very characteristic. Still more readable, more bearing the impress of the man of his age, are his sentimental romances, or rather his novels, dealing with a phase of passion bounded by the limits of a representative social circle, of which the best examples are *Colomba* and *The Etruscan Vase*. Mérimée's art consisted in his vivid colouring, which enabled him to see the contrast, the excesses, the follies of society from their most striking point of view, and to reproduce in his readers the passions which he had himself experienced only as a critic, a *littérateur*, an artist. He was a veritable cynic, of whom it has been said that the very virtues which he describes and illustrates read like vices. His style is bright, brilliant, full of variety; he is gifted with all the wit, the arch insinuation, the sybaritic delicacy, with which some Frenchmen are wont to approach a rather indelicate theme. His posthumous work, *Letters to an Unknown Lady*, bears ample proof of this.

Less brilliant, less polished in form, but more acute and infinitely more profound than Mérimée, was Henri Beyle,<sup>1</sup> who wrote under the name of de Stendhal, the predecessor, the master, and the friend of the author of *Colomba*. Balzac has described him as "one of the most remarkable writers of our times;" he might have said one of the greatest, if Beyle had not wasted his powers in diletantism. Thus he wrote two novels of surprising depth and analytic power—*La Chartreuse de Parme* and *Rouge et Noir*—the former of which, said again Balzac, was one of the finest ever written. Stendhal composed a series of tales of perfect symmetry, like *The Abbess of*

<sup>1</sup> 1783-1842.

*Castro*; he wrote at different periods of his life exquisite estimates on Art and Music; and his treatise on *Love* is unique; but in each of these several paths he stopped on the way, disgusted or idle, and declined to confirm the favourable verdict passed upon him by the most eminent critics. Like others as sensitive as he, he became a species of cynical *Alceste*; men pleased him not, nor women either; and he did not spare them his sarcasms. But Beyle was really a man of kindly disposition, of principle, and of honour; and sarcasm wounded him far more cruelly than others. An actor cannot long perform parts which he really feels every time he assumes them; nor can an author scrutinise the actions of men, if he wishes to live, unless he does so with the inherent callousness which the giants of literature must possess who desire to probe human wounds without danger to themselves. Beyle died young, and he was the victim of his talent. It may be casually observed that he was one of the best English scholars of his time; he could write and speak English fluently, and for a long time he contributed to *Colburn's Magazine*.

II. de Latouche,<sup>1</sup> the author of sundry spirited though somewhat old-fashioned novels, amongst which *Fragolella* may be mentioned as the best, was another of the young school of French novelists which distinguished the later Restoration period; but he is said to have expended the essence of his talent in conversation; and his name has already faded in the recollection of Frenchmen.

We have now arrived at Dumas,<sup>2</sup> the great Dumas, as it has pleased some to call him. His wonderful powers of production, his absence of scruple in taking other men's ideas and in clothing them in garments of his own, his boldness of pen, and his adventurous turn of mind, made him many enemies and detractors, but a still greater number of admirers.

<sup>1</sup> 1745-1851

<sup>2</sup> 1802-1870.



Did he deserve severe censure? Was his immense popularity entirely justified? To each question a negative may be unhesitatingly answered. In his own peculiar style, in the impetuous flow of animal spirits which renders his productions in fiction so continuously attractive, Alexandre Dumas had no rival, nor can the charges of plagiarism, brought chiefly by a scandalous libelmonger who made a living of his craft, destroy a single one of his titles as one of the first novelists of the present age. It has been alleged, with a certain amount of truth, that more than one youthful author helped him in the concoction of those voluminous romances which are numerous and bulky enough to fill a whole library. Even admitting that this is true, it is obvious that the fertile novelist retouched these foreign elements so completely as to make them his own. None of those who have been pointed out as the anonymous fellow-workers of Alexandre Dumas ever produced anything worthy of special mark under their own names. What has been said in these pages of the author of *Gil Blas* may be repeated with regard to the writer of *Monte Christo*; few individualities were more marked and more sterlingly original than his.

Alexandre Dumas was born at Villers-Cotterets, a short distance from Paris, on the 24th of July 1803. He received no education worth speaking of—grew, in fact, without tuition or care, like a lusty young oak abandoned to its luxuriant virginity of growth. The name of Dumas, which he assumed at a later period of his literary career, was his grandmother's; his own name was Davy de la Pailleterie. In the time of Louis XVI. the Marquis de la Pailleterie went to the Antilles, and had there a son by an African negress. This son was to be the father of Alexandre. He was one of the most brilliant officers of Napoleon the First, and was celebrated in the whole army for his bodily strength and extra-

ordinary daring. Alexandre was only four years old when his mulatto father died. He had inherited the latter's physical strength; but that was almost all that he derived from the paternal inheritance. The state of poverty in which his mother was compelled to vegetate ever afterwards accounts for his deficient education. General Dumas had left debts, and when Alexandre approached his twentieth year, Madame Dumas resolved to pay them out of her slender annuity. The result was that the young man courageously set out for Paris in quest of a living for his mother and himself. After much trouble he obtained a small berth as clerk in the duke of Orleans' household, and remained affectionately attached to the family for the remainder of his life. From the first he had been conscious of his own literary instincts, but his mind was so uncultivated that he had to employ his leisure hours in laborious self-instruction. His mental energy, coupled with his physical vigour, carried him through this difficult stage of his career, in which not many could have been conquerors. This singular compound of mental and bodily energy was always the chief characteristic of Alexandre Dumas' talent. To use a somewhat trite simile he was as an athlete who can hold a great weight at arm's length for hours without betraying the slightest symptoms of fatigue. Dumas produced a great deal before he ventured to launch out into print, wrote verses by the yard, comedies and tragedies by the dozen, and stories by the gross; but he had the good sense, rare in a young author, to consign two-thirds of this literary work to the flames. He improved so much that his drama of *Henri III.* was performed at the Théâtre-Français with unprecedented success. This, doubtless, was the cause which induced him to devote the next ten years of his literary existence to dramatic writing; and the talent of Alexandre Dumas was so many-sided that he, perhaps, had no idea of taking to fiction until chance accidentally led

him to this new ground. It was only towards 1840 that he revealed his qualifications as a novelist. Attention was first centred upon his *Travelling Impressions*, wherein truth, wit, and harmless mendacity are so cleverly blended, that the mendacity is forgotten in favour of the wit. These were quickly followed by *The Three Musketeers*, the one of Alexandre Dumas' novels which is probably destined to outlive all the others. This work, within certain limits, may be described as a masterpiece. That the author strongly inspired himself with the creations of Walter Scott is obvious, but Alexandre Dumas made the most of Walter Scott, as a pupil profits by the lessons of a master. *The Three Musketeers* contains only one type, d'Artagnan, but he is too true not to remain. The success of *The Three Musketeers* was transcended by that of *Monte Christo*, superior to the first novel in invention and interest, but considerably below it as a work of art. Dumas remained nearly up to his death, which occurred in 1870, the most popular, as well as the most productive, of French novelists. He continued *The Three Musketeers*, wrote story after story with incredible rapidity, and whether in *Queen Margot*, the *Quarante-Cinq*, *Diane de Poitiers*, and the endless succession of historical novels that issued from his pen, or in *Diane de Clèves* and *Ange Pitou*, his qualities were seldom at fault. These qualities we may resume in a few phrases: for brilliancy of improvisation, for ingenuity of invention, Alexandre Dumas has no equal. Certain authors tire their readers by a lack of vivacity; it may almost be said of Dumas that he fatigues by a too continual overflow of buoyant spirits. Sainte-Beuve, that fastidious annalist of intellectual essence, went perhaps a little beyond the mark when he said "that the *verve* of Dumas seemed to him something like a perpetual bachelor's dinner;"<sup>1</sup> but the comparison is not quite uncalled for. Superabundance of imagi-

<sup>1</sup> *Chroniques Parisiennes*, edited by Jules Troubat.

nation can, however, hardly be described as a defect. If it be added that Dumas' style is always clear, correct, and illuminating, even in its lowest flights, it will be understood why the author of *Monte Christo* left in modern French literature a place which has not yet been filled.

George Sand,<sup>1</sup> a woman of talent who has immortalised her *nom de plume* by so many admirable tales of passion, joy, and grief, is a writer as different from the dashing Dumas as is well possible. Her works were more thoughtful, concentrated, and meditative; she wished to write with a loftier object than that of merely amusing. She was one of those pioneers of literature who strive to enshrine a moral teaching within the compass of a story or a poem. She had a high sense of her duties as a novelist; and this very sense led her at times astray. George Sand, in her own sphere the rival of Balzac, described men as they should be, just as Balzac described them as they are. These two classifications, indeed, represented the two great schools of modern French fiction. The question has often been mooted, Which of these systems was the true one? To provoke such a discussion is to turn round a circle; Balzac was right and George Sand was not wrong. To proceed after the manner of the author of the *Comédie Humaine* demands keener study and a callous impartiality in describing both virtue and vice; to follow George Sand requires a large and settled faith in the perfectibility of humankind. Neither Balzac nor George Sand, we may observe, strictly adhered to their theory of fiction; Madame de Mortsauif that melancholy heroine of *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, whose history of suffering and penance few Frenchmen have read without shedding tears, is an ideal figure in the strictest sense of the term; and some of George Sand's rustic personages are eminently real. Thus both great novelists have transgressed upon each other's

<sup>1</sup> 1804-1876.



ground, and shown how hazardous it is to assign bounds to fiction. But each genius has its own peculiar bent, and the tendency of George Sand's was idealistic. Like Dumas, she was of aristocratic descent. Aurore Dupin (George Sand), born in 1803, was, on the paternal side, grand-daughter of M. Dupin de Franceuil, farmer-general, an intimate friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose name has been transmitted to us in the pages of the *Confessions*. By her mother she was grand-daughter of Marshal de Saxe, and thereby connected with the Bourbon family. Imbued from childhood with the sentimental socialism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, her sensitive dispositions increased as she grew, and at one time the precocious development of her intellect endangered her mind and her body. She seemed to have been created to prove that genius cannot always abide by the tenets and dictates of ordinary life, especially when it is given to woman. She has related her social vicissitudes in an autobiography written with great simplicity and good taste.<sup>1</sup> George Sand married, but, although the feeling of maternity was strongly developed in her, she could not put up with absolute domestication. Her differences with her husband appear to have been the first reason which led her to write; and naturally her earliest production, *Indiana*, dwelt upon the shoals of married life. It has been erroneously said that in this work and other kindred productions George Sand attacked the institution of marriage. There is no doubt that she criticised with a good deal of energy what appeared to her the defects of the marriage contract, such as it is understood in France; and many others have done so without incurring reprimand. But it was too complacently believed that Madame Sand was merely attempting to plead her own cause, when in reality she was opening a discussion of grave import concerning a question upon which much yet remains to be said.

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de ma Vie*, par George Sand.

In appearing before the public, *Aurore Dupin* had borrowed part of the name of a young author, *Jules Sandeau*, who afterwards acquired fame on his own account. Under the pseudonym of *George Sand*, *Valentine* quickly followed *Indiana*, and the celebrity of the new female author soon spread in France with great rapidity, as her style, virile and beautifully pure, contained none of the exaggerations and emphatic figures of speech that characterise some writers of that sex when they first use the pen. Surrounded by novelists of marked individuality, she showed the fine quality of her imaginative faculties by remaining wholly herself. From the very first she attained that majestic harmony of language and exactness of expression in which she may be said to be without equal amongst modern French writers. At the same time, it is certain that *George Sand's* ideas were, at different stages of her literary life, under various influences. Thus she wrote some of her social novels when imbued with the theories of *Pierre Leroux*; *Lella*, that curious rhapsody in which the discouragement of an ardent soul is expressed in really powerful accents, resulted from her intercourse with *Alfred de Musset*; and *Mauprat*, one of her most thoughtful and dramatic stories, was composed under the political influence of one of the most eloquent of French advocates, *Michel de Bourges*. A disciple of *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, *George Sand* had inherited his antipathy for certain fundamental customs of society; but on the whole, her attacks, direct and persistent as they were, had no tinge of inherent bitterness. She was often carried away by her generous impulses and noble instincts; and the otherwise charming stories of *Sinon*, *le Mosaïque d'Angoulême*, *Le Pêche de M. Astolue*, were not free of paradox; but, at all events, it may be said of those of *George Sand's* works that excited controversy, that they never fostered morbid feelings, bitterness, or envy.

The novels we have quoted amongst which there are two

or three real masterpieces, would alone carry the name of George Sand to posterity. In the latter part of her life, however, she gave signs of a new phase in her talent which is not the least brilliant. Town life wearied her; she had retired to her country seat in Berry, and she visited Paris but seldom. It was at Nohant that she wrote that delightful series of pastoral novels which commences with *La Mare au Diable*, and finishes by *Les Maitres Sonneurs*. In these gems of modern fiction, social grievances and declamations were dismissed; the author of *Consuelo* was amongst the peasants; and the language she made them speak, the simple and touching dramas in which she made them take part, the delicate manner in which she described the simplicity of rustic life, begot universal praise and admiration. From a purely artistic point of view these productions of her after-life are the most perfect. More recently George Sand returned to the depicting of social enigmas. She was an indefatigable worker; and if *Jean de la Roche*, *Le Marquis de Villemer*, *Césarine Dietrich*, have not pleased as much as *Les Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré*, the productions of her old age were worthy of her talent. Within a few days of her death, George Sand contributed some pretty tales to the *Revue des deux Mondes*; and so brilliant were the last rays of her splendid decline, that the demise of one who had been writing for full fifty years was regarded as a calamity to French literature.

Contemporary with George Sand and Balzac was a man of subtle wit, of a fastidious and delicate turn of mind, who to the misfortune of literature was carried away in the flower of age, and whose works are all but forgotten, save by a few critics, who enjoy a perfume the more as it is sought by few. Charles de Bernard du Grail,<sup>1</sup> born at Besançon in 1805, has written two works, *Gerfaut*

<sup>1</sup> 1805-1850.

and *Le Gentilhomme Campagnard*, that deserve to remain as models of fiction. Of all French novelists of the literary movement of 1830, Charles de Bernard was the one whom Thackeray professed to admire as a model. Between Thackeray and Bernard there are indeed many affinities. In both we find the same quiet, yet withal incisive, humour, the same delicacy of appreciation, and, it may be added, the same aversion for the uglier sides of human nature. Whilst leaving a broad margin for vice and wickedness, Charles de Bernard believed in the eventual triumph of what is good and pure in this world, and he preferred to leave vice in the dark, and bring forth virtue in full light, or to use the former as a background for the latter. Besides his more serious works, he wrote a number of tales which are only to be compared with those of Prosper Mérimée for their exquisite proportion and nervous precision of style. *La Peau du Lion* is almost as good as *Columba*, and *Un Homme sérieux* is a delightful satire framed in a story taken from the life, which, for originality of conception and treatment, is almost without parallel. A time may come when the public, eschewing the morbid productions of a school that takes realism for reality, will, by returning to such works as those of Charles de Bernard, indicate the bounds which novelists should abstain from transgressing. Bernard died in 1850.

In Frédéric Soulié<sup>1</sup> French fiction had an exponent who, possessing all the essential qualities of a master, failed to obtain a place beside George Sand and Dumas. If it were enough for a writer to produce one single perfect work, Soulié should be a great novelist, for *Le Lion Amoureux*, a story of the highest dramatic bent, made up of the simplest incidents of life, can be read and re-read. Having failed in writing for the stage, Soulié, whose aspirations, however, were rather poetical, devoted himself to fiction. He wrote thus all his life, and the

<sup>1</sup> 1800-1847.



consciousness of having stifled his real talent only to court success and popularity threw a veil of melancholy over the whole of his writings, and inspired most of them with a kind of desponding sarcasm of which he could never completely divest himself. *Les Mémoires du Diable* is in many points worthy of Balzac; it teems with insights into the human heart, and some of its humorous satires are cruelly true; however, an innate morbidness prevails throughout the brightest pages of this remarkable work. The same may be said of Soulié's other productions; they are numerous and of very unequal merit; and as they almost without exception dwell upon movement and melodrama rather than delineation of character, few, beyond *Le Lion Amoureux* and *Les Mémoires du Diable*, will be remembered.

Opinions may vary upon the nature of such works as *The Mysteries of Paris* and *The Wandering Jew*; but there can be but one opinion with regard to the author's rare power of invention. And as Eugène Sue<sup>1</sup> was one of the men of his time who engrossed the largest share of public attention, his place is necessarily marked amongst those of leading novelists. Eugène Sue was about the same age as Frédéric Soulié; he issued from an illustrious race of surgeons, and himself began life as a doctor. He gave up that profession at the death of his father, and after spending the greater portion of a considerable fortune in amusements, he tried writing. His beginnings were hardly encouraging; his maritime stories were not always interesting, and, moreover, he had to contend with formidable rivals; but the success of Dumas and the popularity of George Sand were as nothing compared with the immense hit made by *Les Mystères de Paris* when that voluminous work came to light. This doubtless led Eugène Sue definitely to select social monstrosities as the elements of his later works. *The*

<sup>1</sup> 1804-1857.

*Mysteries of Paris* is a story of literary coarseness, and of extraordinary invention, which is calculated to disgust as much as it interests. The personages of this sinister novel are chosen from the lowest dregs of society, and in the author's powerful hands they enact a hideous drama. Vice is exhibited under such hopelessly horrible colours that the reader puts down the book with a despondent view of humanity. On the whole, Eugène Sue only contributed to the amusement of the masses. *The Wandering Jew*, *Mathilda*, and the other numerous works which the author rapidly produced, conduced to the same result. Alexandre Dumas catered for public amusement, but his literary food was healthy. The writings of Sue are exactly the reverse: one cannot read him without admiring his marvellous gifts of imagination; but one feels that the world could have gone on without him. Eugène Sue died in 1857. Sainte-Beuve has lauded him as the de Sade of modern fiction. This is an exaggeration; but if his pen was responsible for little harm, it did no good.

Of Victor Hugo's earliest romances, *Bug Jargal* and *Han d'Islande*, we have already said something; in reality they were little more than the promising but uncouth manifestations of one of the loftiest geniuses of the age. Besides, they were penned by a boy hardly out of his teens. But at the beginning of Louis Philippe's reign, Hugo had already earned his place amongst the leading writers of French romance by his *Last Days of a Condemned Man* (1829), and *Notre Dame de Paris*. Subsequently Victor Hugo acquired more substantial titles to the name of novelist, but neither the first nor the second of the two works I have just mentioned can properly speaking be styled novels. The *Last Days of a Condemned Man* is an eloquent and terrible attack upon capital punishment, couched in anything but romantic terms. Claude Gueux, the "condemned," is not a character of fiction; the author

has given a name and an individuality to an instance of the case ; he quotes nothing more. As to *Notre Dame de Paris*, it is no doubt a powerful book, magnificent in style, full of cleverness, learning, descriptive power, and poetic inspiration. Gringoire, the cynical philosopher, is drawn with a masterly hand ; no one but a deep thinker and a true poet could have described the dark, sinister priest, Claude Frollo, and imagined the creation of bewitching Esmeralda. The main idea of the work, too, is generous, particularly on the part of a poet who must naturally have a feeling of horror for monsters and monstrosities ; it is a rehabilitation of physical ugliness and intellectual stagnation. Quasimodo, the sexton of Notre Dame, is an incarnation of both ; his mind is as deformed as his body ; and still the poet raises him higher than the towers of the famous cathedral, by showing him in love with a creature as fair as he is ugly. Nevertheless neither *Notre Dame de Paris* nor *Claude Gueux* are novels in the sense we usually attach to the word. Victor Hugo's later productions in fiction, although always embodying a leading purpose on the part of the author, had less of romantic disquisition on all subjects than this remarkable work.

I have just said that Victor Hugo attempted to rehabilitate moral and physical deformity by Love. In *Notre Dame de Paris* a man is the subject of his special pleading ; we shall see him, in the drama, undertaking a similar task for a woman. His other novels, written after 1848, do not belong to the period we are dealing with.

## § 2. THE HUMAN COMEDY.

If I have passed lightly over the romance-writers and novelists hitherto enumerated—of whom some exacted little attention, whilst some have rendered themselves equally famous as poets or dramatists—it was in order that we might take a more leisurely review of the life and works of Honoré de Balzac,<sup>1</sup> the prince of French novelists, who is in himself the epitome of his class, if not the greatest modern exponent of human nature through the medium of prose fiction. Born at Tours in the last year of the eighteenth century, Balzac received his earlier education at the college of Vendôme, giving little evidence of the special talent which he was hereafter to display. His story of *Louis Lambert* preserves many reminiscences of his school days. In his fifteenth year his father went to reside in Paris, and the future novelist was trained for the profession of the law. In due course he took his degree, completed his legal studies, and entered successively the office of an *avocat* and of a notary. But the career which his father had chosen for him, and of the commencement of which more than one episode is preserved in the stories of *César Birotteau* and *The Interdict*, was not congenial to the young Honoré. He read works of fiction and the drama at every available opportunity—Rabelais a dozen times over—and made no secret of his desire to be an author, undeterred by the ridicule and the threats of his father. At the age of twenty the disagreement resulted in his leaving the house of his unbending parent; Balzac took a room in the Rue des Lessiguliers, close to the library of the Arsenal, where he passed most of his time. Barely supporting himself, he contrived at last to write a

<sup>1</sup> 1799-1850.



tragedy, *Henrietta of England*, which he submitted to his former teacher, M. Andrieux, afterwards perpetual secretary of the Academy. The judge whom he had selected advised him to throw the miserable attempt—for such no doubt it was—into the fire. Balzac accepted the rebuff, went back to his poverty and his labour, ate little, thought, read, walked, and worked much, until at last his father relented and supplied him with the means of pursuing his chosen vocation more at his ease. From about the year 1822 Balzac had discovered the true bent of his genius, and begun to produce stories by the dozen. In a few years he had written as many as forty, which he issued under the assumed names of Viel-lerglé, Lord R'hoone—an anagram of Honoré—and Horace Saint-Aubin, and for which he received the most pitiable doles of money. The first novel procured him ten pounds, and the price rose gradually to as much as sixty pounds, which he usually anticipated in the shape of bills, thus considerably reducing his emoluments. With some of the money thus earned he was imprudent enough to bring out an edition of *La Fontaine* and *Molière* in one volume; and that at once put him behind the world to the tune of six hundred pounds. Another speculation, the opening and subsequent sale of a printing-office and type-foundry, added only to his difficulties.

*The Last Chouan* (1827) was the earliest work of Balzac which he published with his own name on the title-page. In a few years Honoré de Balzac was a household word in France, and in Paris especially, whose life he had shown himself able to photograph with so much fidelity, and to surround with such a brilliant halo. It was about this time that the young novelist was introduced by his publisher to M. Emile de Girardin, in whose paper, *la Mode*, Balzac, then known only in the narrow circle of his intimate friends, wrote a tale, *El Verdugo* (*the Executioner*). Some time after, about the end of 1829, or in 1830, M. de Girardin conceived the idea of

publishing, as an addition to a daily paper, a biographical supplement, and Balzac was one of its most active contributors; but this journal lived only a few months. *The Philosopher of Marriage*, the *Bel de Séjour*, *Gobseck*, *A Double Family*, were amongst the productions of this period of Balzac's career. Meanwhile our author was still poor, still fettered by the results of his earlier speculations; and in order to liberate himself he engaged in new ones. Thus, having conceived the idea that the old Roman mines of Sardinia were still capable of yielding mineral treasures, he went off one fine morning with five hundred francs in his purse, to turn his notion into gold. On the way he unfortunately enlarged upon his plan to a fellow-passenger, a Genoese; and after breaking his journey at Corsica, he arrived in Sardinia only to find that his travelling-companion had anticipated him, and was already turning the enterprise to good account. In 1833 he undertook a journey to Switzerland, where he remained some time at Pré-Évêque, near Geneva, and afterwards went to Italy to see Lake Maggiore. In this and the following year he produced *Eugénie Grandet* and *le Père Goriot*, two of the most characteristic, the most quaint, and the most remarkable, of his novels. His genius and his popularity were now at their highest. Whatever else he was destined to do, he could scarcely produce anything more incontestably grand and artistic. In 1834 Balzac, who always dickered after proprietorship in some form or another, bought the *Chronique de Paris*, then under the management of a Mr. Duckett, an Englishman. In the columns of this newspaper Balzac introduced Théophile Gautier, at this time twenty-four years of age, whose merits the novelist was one of the first to recognise. Amongst his other friends were Jules Sandeau, the companion of the eccentric and highly talented lady whom we have already mentioned, and who adopted and rendered famous the literary pseudonym of George Sand.

Balzac's activity was immense. He has left behind him a curious classification of his principal works of fiction, to the number of one hundred and thirty-eight; though some thirty of these exist by their titles alone, their projector having died before he could elaborate the plots which he had doubtless conceived in every instance. His "Catalogue of works to be contained in the Human Comedy" is divided into three parts; 1st, "Studies of Manners," subdivided into six books: Scenes of private life, of provincial life, of Parisian life, of political life, of military life, and of country life; 2d, "Philosophical Studies;" and 3d, "Analytical Studies."

A list of works written by Balzac, year by year, would illustrate more clearly than anything his unflagging energy and great fertility.<sup>1</sup> His pen was rarely idle for a single day. He left behind him five dramas:—*Vautrin*, *The Resources of Quinola*, *Pamela Giraud*, *The Stepmother*, and *Mercadet*; lives of La Fontaine and Molière, a *Monograph on the Parisian Press*, essays and letters innumerable, not to mention frequent contributions to many newspapers. His works went through many editions in his lifetime, and earned for their author a considerable sum of money. His love of spending was as great as his love of earning. He bought house after house, each one grander than the last, and entertained his many friends right royally. Much also was spent in travel, of which Balzac was particularly fond. From 1833 to 1840 he travelled almost continually, writing as he moved from place to place. In several of the French provinces, in Germany, Italy, Prussia, Austria, Russia, he combined relaxation with

<sup>1</sup> Let us be content with an enumeration of the labours of 1832: *The Calvinist Martyr*, *The Message*, *The Unknown Masterpiece*, *Colonel Chabert*, *The Curé of Tours*, *The Exchange*, *Louis Lambert*, *The Forsaken Wife*, *The Grenadière*, *The Famous Gaudissart*, *The Maranas*, *A Passion in the Desert*, *The Hundred Droll Stories* (the first ten), *Two Tales*, *A Conversation between Eleven o'Clock and Midnight*, and *The Spanish Grandee*. All these works of fiction were independent of Balzac's other labours.

hard work, and sought day by day for new experiences. From 1843 to 1847 he took up his residence at Passy; but in the latter year he set out on a second voyage to Russia. Here he was attacked by a distressing weakness of the heart, and was advised to return to Paris. He reached the capital on the 23d of February, and the very next day the revolution of 1848 broke out. In 1849 Balzac went to Russia for the third time; and in March of the same year he married there the Countess de Hanska, a wealthy widow. Four months later he returned to Paris; and there, at the age of fifty-one, he died of the malady, which was due, no doubt, as much to his incessant labour at the desk as to any other cause.

The genius of Balzac is not to be discussed in a dozen or score of paragraphs; the task would be as hopeless for him who attempted it as it would be ineffectual for his readers. Rising from a repusal of three or four of his most characteristic works, one is impressed by a sense of the futility of seeking to convey to others the manifold effects produced upon one's sensibility and one's judgment. Scarcely any French writer so thoroughly defies the effort to classify his talent and to catalogue his virtues and his faults. Yet one thing may be said, which seems in itself to comprise or imply all the rest; although it is true that this "rest" can be felt and understood only by the man who has read at least a dozen of Balzac's masterpieces. The author of the *Human Comedy*—which is, with at least equal truth, a human tragedy—is the anatomist of passion, the vivisector of the human heart. Nothing better expresses the peculiarity of his talent, which is occupied wholly with humanity. The feelings of his followmen, but especially of his women, are for Balzac what their bodies are for the physiologist. His pen is his scalpel, and it is ever in his hand. He dissects, he fills his laboratory with preparations; but he leaves to others the task of ticketing and of lecturing upon the results of his



dexterity. There have been novelists, like Dickens, who were quite as close observers of their kind ; but they keep to the surface where Balzac cuts deep into the tissues of his subject—they are mere surgeons and apothecaries where Balzac is a vivisector. There have been other novelists who have taken the useful or the beautiful for their guide ; but for Balzac passion is the matter and the mode of his art. "Passion," he says himself, "is the whole of humanity ; without it, religion, history, romance, art, would be useless." Rousseau also had made passion his theme and his subject-matter ; but he was content to study it in his own nature, whilst Balzac sets no limit to the fields of his operations. He does not accept an epitome, he is scarcely satisfied even with a type ; he simply passes from example to example, never dreaming that he has established a physiological truth, never resting from the repetition of his demonstrations until death snatches the knife from his hands.

For the rest, let us arrive at the genius of Balzac by studying one or two of his works ; and first of all the master-key of his system, in so far as he can be said to have had a system—*The Physiology of Marriage*, written at leisure during six years.<sup>1</sup> In more than one sense this book reveals the spirit and the tendency of its author's mind, and might naturally serve as the introduction and the explanation of his *Human Comedy*. With the true spirit of a Pantagruelist he sees a tragedy, identical, or at least conterminous with human existence ; he is penetrated by it, he becomes the seer and the prophet of a new revelation ; and, far from raising the cry of a Jeremiah, or a John in the wilderness, he proclaims to his generation and to posterity a gigantic comedy. He has been on the point of weeping at the thought of all that is implied in the central social bond, at the almost inevitable desecration of the holiest sacrament of human religion ; and by way of

<sup>1</sup> 1824-1829.

impressing the sad truth which he so clearly realises upon the souls of his fellow-men, he prepares to make them laugh, devoting himself to this vocation for the remainder of his existence. Undoubtedly it was as a vocation high and serious that Balzac regarded his authorship. He was no mere writer of romances by force of habit, or for gain alone. Consciously or unconsciously, he was a great teacher. An anatomist of vice rather than of virtue, surrounding vice with all the allurements of art and voluptuousness, rarely moralising, almost always laughing, employing all his resources to produce a scene of exquisite comedy, in which infamy of some kind is invariably the central idea of his plot, he is still none the less a moralist in effect and by his philosophic design; his lightest creations are more properly lessons than novels. To one who had read nothing of Balzac except his *Droll Tales*, this might seem a bold assertion; but I advance its truth only upon the aggregate of all his works, and I anticipate that I shall do much to prove it by considering the ideas embraced in *The Physiology of Marriage*.

Of all the phenomena which presented themselves to Balzac's mind, from boyhood upwards, the one which appears to have struck him most forcibly was woman. That which is to some of us an enigma, a toy, a victim, an idol, was to Balzac the be-all and end-all of humanity; and it became, as a consequence, the theme and the focus of his labours. Marriage, its laws, their effect and their violation—this was the science to which he consecrated all his talent and all his energies, and to the physiology of which he devoted the thoughts of six of the best years of his life. "How many men," he says in one place, "got married without knowing what a woman is . . . There are men who are children all their lives, who quit life empty handed, having vegetated, after speaking about love and pleasure as slaves speak of liberty." Balzac, we have seen, was fifty years old before he

took a wife, but he was not twenty when he was deeply immersed in the study of his engrossing subject, and when he was already in a position to say something. From his very law-books he derived suggestions and stimulants to his genius. He tells us of the feelings excited in his mind when his eyes fell upon the word "adultery." "Immense in the code, never did this word present itself to my imagination without drawing behind it a melancholy procession of ideas : tears, shame, hatred, terror, secret crimes, bloody wars, families without a head, were personified before me, and started up suddenly when I read the sacramental word Adultery." His talent had, in fact, received its bent ; his *Human Comedy* existed in his brain before he had written a word of it ; and with the mantle of Rabelais upon his shoulders he sat down to his *Physiology of Marriage ; or, A Meditation of Eclectic Philosophy upon Conjugal Happiness and Unhappiness ; published by a young bachelor*. His motto—"Happiness is the end which all societies ought to set before them"—was chosen in all seriousness ; and it might stand at the head of almost every work of Balzac.

*The Physiology of Marriage* was published without the author's name ; but it reached a second edition within a year. It was fully criticised, and for the most part adversely, even during the great increase of liberty secured by the press in 1830. Jules Janin, writing in the *Journal des Debats*, after admitting that the book "might be read from beginning to end without great effort," and praising it with faint condemnation by declaring that it failed from "being too complete," ended by flatly stigmatising it as "infernal." Janin would not have written this word thirty years later, but we cannot wonder if he did not understand the book on a first reading, or apart from the novels which followed, illustrated, and justified it. Balzac himself recognised by instinct the value of what he was writing. Above all he felt that, if *The Physio-*

*logy of Marriage* was a failure, if it so much as contained what he did not intend to say, or omitted what he intended, his whole notion of humanity would be belied, and his every claim to philosophic insight would be extinguished. Young as he was, he had pursued his labours on a sound system, and had spared no pains to arrive at sound inductions. He spent months and years over the physiology of the brain, before he attacked the physiology of humanity. He had thumbed the books of his predecessors, he had exhausted the souls of women and of men. As soon as he perceived that his mind contained what he wished to utter, he permitted nothing to intervene between himself and his work. Let us take his own picture of the labour of a conscientious author, travelling with a production by which he knew that he must eventually stand or fall. He wrote to M. Levassasseur, who was producing the work, as follows :—

" My poor unfortunate publisher, the most lovely girl in the world can only give what she has. I work all day at the *Physiology*. I give but six hours a night to the scenes of which I have only to correct the proofs to set my conscience free. I am quite ready to send my copy necessary to finish on the 15th, if you wish it ; but it would be the most odious murder that we have ever committed on a book. There is something in me which prevents my doing ill with a good conscience. It is a question of giving the book a future. . . . If . . . I were to potter about, if I were to write prospectuses, mend old shoes, if I played billiards, if I drank and ate, and so forth—but I have not one idea, I do not take one step outside the *Physiology*. I dream of it, I do nothing else. I am smitten with it. . . . The author of that work is between success and the scaffold at every line. I never so well understood its importance. I wanted to make a jest, and you came one morning and asked me to do in three months what Brillat-Savarin<sup>1</sup> took ten years to do. He spoke merely of good living, and I speak of the most serious matter in

<sup>1</sup> Brillat-Savarin was the author of a *Physiology of Taste*.



France. He had a new topic, and I the most threadbare topic in the world. There is a miracle in it, whereof I will boast; namely, that the first volume of the *Physiology* was recast in its present form between the 1st of September and the 10th of November 1829; for on the tenth the *ite missa est* of the first volume will be said. Don't think that this letter is an excuse. I work as ardently and as consecutively as any human creature can. But I am only the most humble servant of the Muse, and that hussey has her moments of humour. Don't despair, for on the 15th I will frankly tell you on what you may rely. Only then shall I have fathomed the extent of the mischief in the second volume."

Judge from this the character of all Balzac's work; for with him it was a question of something more than the entertainment of his readers and his own personal profit.

The *Physiology* is written as though it were a constitutional and military history of a State—which, in fact, it is. The headings of the chapters carry out this idea: "A Treatise on Marital Politics—Customs—Essay on the Police—The Budget—Civil War—Of Allies—Conjugal Peace—Principles of Strategy—Manifestos," and the like. These "Meditations," as the author calls them, are all in the Pantagruelistic style—to wit, no style at all; but in the midst of theories and paradoxes, of tortuous arguments and quaint axioms, of inconsequent digressions and absurd commentaries, we find the profoundest reflections and the most earnest and lofty ideas. Every page abounds in this medley of the serious and the ridiculous. Let us take a few examples at random. We read in the meditation on "First Symptoms:—"

"Sometimes your wife suddenly displays an extreme tenderness, as though repenting of her thoughts and her projects; sometimes she is moody and inexplicable; in short, she fulfils the *varium et mutabile femina* which we have at times had the folly to attribute to their constitution."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Meditation II.*

And again :

" These symptoms, light as a vapour, are like those clouds which barely flock the azure of the sky, and which are called flowers of the storm. Presently the colours take deeper hues."

And again :

" When we extol those girls who can hardly be found, so happily trained by chance, so well constituted by nature, and whose delicate soul supports the rude contact of the great soul of that which we call a man, we mean to speak of those noble and rare creatures of whom Goethe has given us a model in the *Clara of Egmont* ; we are thinking of those women who seek no other glory than that of well discharging their rôle ; bending themselves with astonishing suppleness to the pleasure and will of those whom nature has given them for masters ; alternately rising in the vast sphere of their thoughts and stooping to the simple task of amusing them like children ; comprehending both the oddness of those souls so powerfully strained and their slightest words and their vaguest looks ; divining, in short, that the pleasures, the ideas, and the morality of a Byron cannot be those of a haberdasher."

Or, to take something more directly in the Pantagruelistic vein :—

" The men whose nose is besmeared with snuff ;

" Those who are unluckily born with an everlasting cough ;

" The husbands who chew ;

" The men whose sly and bilious temperament always gives them the appearance of having eaten a sour apple ;

" The men who in private life have a few ridiculous habits, and who, in spite of everything, retain their dirty appearance ;

" In fine, old men, who marry young women ;—all these folk are especially predestinated ! "

It is impossible to draw a parallel between Balzac as a novelist and any English novelist ; or, at all events,

the parallel would be neither close nor far extended. In England there have been writers of fiction who have invariably taken love for their theme ; writers whose specialty was to contrast pure domestic love with illicit passion ; writers who have studied and illustrated the physiology of marriage, and the association of two hearts without marriage ; writers who have dissected humanity with more or less of cunning and courage ; writers who have wielded the pen of genuine Pantagruelism ; writers who have sketched character with all the force of an intense realism, and whose brush has painted an interior with more than Dutch minuteness. There have been many-sided writers—De Foe, Sterne, Thackeray, Dickens—who have combined two or three of these characteristics, and who have raised themselves to the first rank amongst English novelists ; but England has not, nor has any other nation had, a writer who united in himself to so marvellous a degree, with such creative power and such vivid originality, all those brilliant specialties of fictive genius which Balzac displayed. In the nature and the reach of his capacities he seems to me to stand easily at the head of romantic fiction, without an equal in any country or in any age. I know no one who succeeds more completely in enthralling the attention of his readers. There are, of course, hundreds who can rouse our curiosity, our interest, our admiration ; but whilst Balzac does all this, and to the highest degree, he holds us at the same time intent upon the acquisition of a knowledge which we feel to be incalculably serviceable to us, which opens before us a vast field of inquiry, and tempts us with a vast promise of power—a knowledge which we have nowhere found so clearly and simply offered to our mind—the knowledge of the human heart. And not only is this knowledge set before us amidst all the allurements of engrossing plot, circumstance, episode, and commentary, but it is propounded with remarkable art.

If we are shocked at times, it is by the revelation of the truth, not by the wanton creation of the writer; if we are disgusted, it is by ourselves or by human nature, not by the outrage, the recklessness, or even the clumsiness of the artist. In their two several directions, perhaps Thackeray and Dickens, amongst English novelists of the present century, have approached nearest to the power and the manner of Balzac: but in art alone: in construction and harmony both of them remain below the standard revealed in the *Human Comedy*, even though they may be superior to it in purity of expression and in plot.

Let us do justice to the men whom we have compared, however incidentally, with Balzac. The causes of the latter's superiority are manifold, and by no means personal alone. It is true that the individual art of the Frenchman is of the highest order; but it is also true that he had a subject, or a class of subjects, which was virtually out of the reach of Englishmen, which could not be freely treated by any but a Frenchman. Not only do a more advanced laxity of public opinion and perhaps a more robust literary appreciation permit amongst our neighbours the liberal handling of scenes of passion and romance, but the condition of society provides more abundant illustrations; so that what would in England be outrageous and ludicrous exaggeration, is in France generally a more or less commonplace occurrence. And the cause of this difference, again, is not entirely a difference in the latitude with respect to the relations of the sexes allowed in the two countries. There is inherent in the French genius a conception of these relations fundamentally distinct from the conceptions entertained by any other people, which regulates society, which gives a special tone and colour to the social institutions, and which consequently dominates French fiction. The life of a woman in France is first one of comparative slavery, and next of comparative independence of control.



In England a girl enjoys most freedom before she is married ; the altar once passed, everything tends to restrict her liberty, to bind her to her husband's side, to withdraw her from courtship and romance. In France the young girl is in thorough subjection to her parents, and looks forward to her marriage as a means of throwing off her restraint. Moreover, the vast majority of marriages in France are between men of mature age and young women ; and as the bride has nearly always a dowry, she feels on this account also a greater independence of her husband. Courtesies to a married woman are therefore usual, and indeed expected, from the unmarried men of her acquaintance ; and there is thus more temptation, not to say excuse, for the woman who is predisposed to indulge in a *liaison*. Again, the question has its physiological aspect. From various causes a French couple has, on the average, fewer children than an English or German couple, and the wife has fewer domestic cares and duties standing between herself and society. Ninety per cent of the wives who forget their husbands in France are women who, if they are mothers at all, have one, or at most two children, either put out to nurse, or kept during the greater part of the day out of their parents' sight. The domestic life in France rarely eclipses the social life ; and French society is of necessity very different from English society. Climate, characteristics of race, habit, food, all combine to produce the artificial condition of things which Balzac has painted, no doubt at its worst, in such vivid and impressive colours.

No better example of Balzac, no more speaking picture of life and manners in the Paris of 1846, no more striking instance of the anatomist's knowledge of human nature in its brightest and its darkest aspects, could form the object of our attention than *La Cousine Bette*, coming under the head of "Poor Relations" in the "Scenes of Parisian Life." This

"serious and terrible study of Parisian manners," as its author rightly describes it, is one of the most characteristic and the most frightful—I can find no better word—of Balzac's romances. The undiluted realism of the story, from beginning to end, corrodes the heart; scarcely has the interest of the plot and the characters seized upon us, when we sit down fascinated, as by the eyes of a beautiful and venomous snake; we shudder, but we cannot close our eyes. Of plot, indeed, in the sense of concealed motives and suspended issues, there is scarcely any, either in this or in the other novels of Balzac.

Cousin Bette is the poor cousin of the Baroness Adeline Hulot, who has been brought up to Paris, and treated with kindness by the family of the baron, one of the heads of department in the Ministry of War. Bette (Lisbeth) supports herself by making gold lace and embroideries; but she is always welcome at Adeline's house, and is closely attached to her cousin's daughter, Hortense. When the story opens, Bette is represented as an old maid of thirty-five, somewhat hard-favoured, and more than reasonably resentful of the patronage bestowed upon her, or rather of the superior fortune of her married cousin, over whom she had tyrannised in her childhood, though she was by five years the younger of the two. She conceals her jealousy well enough, and is content to play a humble part for the sake of the definite advantage of being free of the house. Bette, however, despite her age and want of personal attractions, is in love. She lodges in a house in an unfashionable quarter of Paris; and in the room above her own lives a young Polish refugee, Count Wenceslas Steinbock, a sculptor, who has not yet asserted his claim to public recognition. Lisbeth rescues him when he is at the point of suicide, and establishes over him the sway of a gratitude which is daily increased by her rough kindnesses and wholesome stimulus to exertion. The old maid is romantic

on the subject of her *protégé*; but in an incautious outbreak she boasts of her lover to Hortense, and so piques the curiosity of that golden-haired maiden that the latter cunningly unearths the young count, flatters him, falls in love with him, and ends by stealing him away from her cousin. This is one of the sources from which the action of the story is made to spring; for Cousin Bette, robbed of her treasure, is thenceforth possessed by a demon of revenge, and devotes herself to wreaking her passion upon the whole family of Hulot.

The task is made only too easy for her. The Baron Hulot d'Ervy at the age of sixty was one of the most infatuated *roués* of Paris. "At this age love becomes a vice; insensate vanities have then part in it. Thus Adeline saw her husband become incredibly particular in his dress, dyeing his hair and whiskers, wearing belts and stays. He determined to remain good-looking at any cost. This solicitude for personal appearance, a fault which he had been wont to make the subject of satire, he pushed to an extreme." The natural consequence was that he reduced himself to poverty; and whilst Adeline strove hard to keep up appearances in the grand house which had been to her such a happy home, they were in a state of the greatest embarrassment. Lisbeth had another ally in Monsieur Crevel, a retired perfumer, with all the instincts of a tradesman still strong upon him, but with as much weakness for the fair sex as the baron. He describes himself as "a former vendor of perfumes, successor to César de Birotteau, at the Queen of the Roses, in the street Saint Honoré, formerly *adjoint* of the mayor, captain in the National Guard, knight of the Legion of Honour;" though, when his pride is especially strong upon him, he prefers to speak of himself as belonging to the "upper aristocracy, Marshal de Richelieu . . . Pompadour, Dubarry, *roué*, and whatever you can imagine of eighteenth century" style. There is this

grand distinction between Crevel and Hulot, that whilst they both pursue the same ends, and both bring ruin upon themselves by the same courses, the ex-perfumer is the fool of his inordinate vanity, and the baron of his inordinate self-indulgence. Balzac has nowhere created two more life-like characters; and nowhere has he reached a higher level of dramatic comedy than in describing the adventures of this ridiculous couple of old rakes. They are, even as much as Cousin Bette, the centre of dramatic interest in this ghastly chapter of the *Human Comedy*; and perhaps Molière himself has never produced anything more exquisite than some of the scenes in which the two besotted old men play a principal part. Hulot's son, a fine character, inheriting, like Hortense, the grackest qualities of his mother, has married Crevel's daughter, induced thereto by the reckless selfishness of his father. Crevel does not esteem his son-in-law very highly; and he owes the baron a grudge for robbing him of Josépha, the celebrated *prima donna*, whom the perfumer had in the first instance launched upon the world. This grudge he attempts to pay off by seducing the wife of his friend; but Adeline rejects him with scorn. It is then that Cousin Bette perceives a chance of entering upon the execution of her ruthless plan of revenge.

One day the baron had set his eyes upon a charming little woman, another of Lisketh's fellow-lodgers, who turns out to be Madame Marnette, the wife of one of his subordinates at the War-Office. Valérie Marnette is the Circe of the story, to whom nearly every male character with whom we have to do is in turn subjected. She is the embodiment of the power of inspiring passion, and fascinates with an incarnate seductiveness. Upon her Balzac has lavished all the skill of which he is capable. The too susceptible baron had never had better excuse for his weakness than when he fell desperately in love with the little witch who was destined to plunge him



in the very depths of degradation and dishonour. As for Valérie, she had been waiting patiently for such a chance as this ; and so had her despicable husband—a man whose incredible baseness is almost sufficient to sicken the reader of a story whose repulsive features already make so great a call upon his equanimity. Marneffe gives his wife *carte blanche*, and she loses no time in securing the head of her husband's office ; and the baron, after raising a large sum of money at a most reckless sacrifice, duly installs his new goddess in a magnificent hôtel, wherein Marneffe accepts a comfortable suite of apartments. By this time Valérie has made a friend and confidante of Cousin Bette, and the latter consents to keep the house of the irresistible Dalila, whom she hopes to make the instrument of her revenge. Step by step the baron advances in his infatuation, pledging his means, his future, his honour, in return for the present gratification of his blind passion. Poor Adeline is almost entirely deserted, after being transferred like a chattel, and without a murmur, to a couple of rooms in an unpretentious house, where she is presently dependent for her subsistence upon the charity of her married children, and of her husband's brother. The latter, a Marshal of France, a relic of Napoleon's famous guard, an austere republican, with an insane devotion to the memory of the *petit Caporal*, is already poor through the sacrifice which he has made for his brother ; and Adeline's own uncle has been even more cruelly victimised by the selfish *roué*, having consented to go to Algeria for the express purpose of diverting the national revenue into the hands of the utterly abandoned slave of Valérie's charms.

It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the arts which Valérie employs to draw one after another of her admirers into her net. Hulot, Crevel, Steinbock, the Brazilian Montès de Montéjanos, all are her victims, and each believes himself her favoured, if not her sole possessor. The scene in

which "the five fathers of the church," as Marneffe calls them, are gathered round the same table, four at least of them elated by the prospect of paternity held out to them by this French Calypso, is full of subtle but untranslatable comedy. She fleeces Hulot to the very skin; she robs and cheats Crevel, humouring him first through his grudge against Hulot, and next by making him think that he has touched her heart, and eventually marrying him for his wealth and position; she plunders Montès, plays fast and loose with him, grossly deceives him, until a terrible punishment overtakes her at his hands; she fascinates and seduces Wenceslas, from whom alone she extracts nothing save his honour and the happiness of his young wife, thereby ministering to Bette's infernal revenge. The contrast, the mutual attractions of this pair of utterly unconsolentious women, are admirably drawn. Selfish interest on the part of each is what brings them together; but no sooner are their interests harmonised than they really love each other, with that passion of woman for woman which, as Balzac says, is the strongest of all passions.

Beyond the scenes of pure comedy there is little enough to relieve this terrible story. A few touches of natural generosity do indeed cast an occasional ray of light across the darkness. Josephine, the Jewish *centauree*, who has thrown over Crevel and Hulot in turn, and is living in splendour under the protection of the duke d'Hermouville, is softened when the degraded and ruined baron comes nearby to beg for her assistance; she is fairly melted when Adeline herself appeals to her generosity and humbly abases herself to the dust before the martyr of virtue and innocence. The scene in which she bursts out into a rhapsody of meretricious triumph at the recital of her old lover's absolute and irremediable ruin is as fine as anything in the novel.

\* She made Hulot sit down in the splendid drawing-room where he had last seen her.

“‘Is it true, old man,’ she resumed, ‘that you have killed your brother and your uncle, ruined your family, mortgaged the house of your children, and spent with your princess the money belonging to the government of Algeria’?”

“The baron sadly bent his head.

“‘Well! I am delighted by that!’ cried Josépha, who rose full of enthusiasm. ‘It is a general conflagration! ’Tis Sardapalus! ’tis grand! ’tis thorough! One is a blackguard, but one has a heart. Well! I like a locust, impassioned for women like you, better than those cold, soulless money-dealers who are called virtuous, and who ruin tens of thousands of families with their ways and means, which are gold for themselves and iron for their dupes! You have only ruined your own people; you have only sold yourself; but you have an excuse, both physical and moral.’ . . .

“And she struck a tragic attitude, and said:

“‘Tis Venus bound completely to her prey.’<sup>1</sup>

‘There!’ she added, frisking round.

“Hulot found himself absolved by vice; vice smiled upon him amidst her lavish luxury. The magnitude of crime was here, as it is for juries, an extenuating circumstance.”

The vivacity of Balzac’s genius is no less conspicuous than its gravity; his narratives weigh upon us by the intensity of their power, but they sparkle throughout with gems of thought. The great Pantagruelist of modern days, second in vigour to Rabelais alone, is, as the name implies, a philosopher in *petto*, never deeper than when his thoughts seem to be on the surface, never better worth studying than when he lets fall a casual observation in the midst of an unimportant description. The serious, the light, the didactic and the *narquois*, turn up side by side on almost every page; we must be ever on the alert if we would not miss the pith of twenty paragraphs in a single phrase. Let us give a few examples. Is the painter transferring to his canvas the first look of admiration be-

<sup>1</sup> This is a quotation from Racine’s *Phidre*.

stowed by Hulot upon Valérie ; he adds : " It is like a flower the perfume of which all Parisian ladies breathe with delight when they find it in their path. There are women devoted to their duty, virtuous and pretty, who return to their homes rather dull, if they have not made up their little nosegay (of admiration) during their walk." Would the author have his fling against the corruption of manners in modern France ; he talks of " the new fangled scruples, whereby the poor weak woman ends by being considered as the victim of her lover's desires, as a sister of charity, dressing wounds like a devoted angel. This new art of love makes a vast medley of gospel words for devils' uses." Is he describing the vengeance of Cousin Bette through the machinations of her friend Valérie ; he observes " that the joys of satisfied hate are the most ardent, the strongest that the heart knows. Love is as it were the gold, hate the iron of that mine of feelings which is within us." Would he lift his reader above the commonplace interpretation of the crimes and follies which he is depicting ; he says : " In Paris life is too busy for vicious men to do wrong by instinct ; they simply use vice to ward off aggressions." Would he describe a politician, like Claude Vignon ; he says : " The politician of 1840 replaces somewhat the *abbé* of the eighteenth century." Listen to the philosophy of " the protected : " " Life is a garment ; when it is dirty we brush it ! when it is torn we mend it ; but we keep ourselves clothed as long as we can." Or again, to the shrewd observation on the purifying effect of trouble on a worthy mind : " In the great storms of life we initiate the captains who, in tempests, lighten the ship of its heaviest cargo. The lawyer lost his pride of heart, his external assurance, his orator's arrogance, his political self-assumption . . . and he judged life after a wholesome fashion, perceiving that the universal law compels us to be satisfied in everything with approximations." Such sentences as these are sprinkled over the pages of Balzac ;



and they would make, if collected from all his works, a volume of thoughts and sayings as shrewd as they would be interesting.

The aim and effect of Balzac's writings are essentially moral ; and this I maintain in spite of the fact that the majority of them are such as public opinion in England would never allow to be circulated here. Let us take the most crucial test afforded in the *Cousine Bette*—the bearing of the good characters in contrast with that of the bad ones. It is a fact that, of all the leading personages represented in this story as being generally beyond reproach, and as the victims of the crimes of those whom they love, there is but one—Marshal Hulot—who does not commit a very heinous crime. Hortense, in her youth, takes advantage of Bette's confidence to destroy her happiness ; Hulot's son virtually connives at the murder of Valérie ; Fischer, the uncle of Adeline, swindles the government in Algeria in order to provide the baron with funds ; whilst Adeline, with the idea of rescuing her husband from dishonour, offers herself to Crevel, and is rejected by him as scornfully as, a few years before, he had been rejected by her. This horrible triumph of evil over good does not, in any single instance, lead us to conclude that evil must necessarily triumph, or that goodness is impotent before the attacks of evil ; on the contrary, it serves to strengthen and intensify our horror of all the glittering seductions of vice, whose successes pale in beauty and attractiveness before the very relapses of virtue. We rise from the perusal of a book like *Cousine Bette* as from that of an impressive sermon.

“Vice is a creature of such frightful mien,  
That, to be hated, needs but to be seen ;”

and Balzac shows us vice in all its nakedness and hideousness, if also in all its splendour.

M. Taine, in a well-known comparison between the characters of Valérie Marnette, and Thackeray's Becky Sharpe, has said :—<sup>1</sup>

"Balzac loves his Valérie; this is why he explains and magnifies her. He does not labour to make her odious, but intelligible. He gives her the education of a prostitute, a 'husband as depraved as a prisonful of galley-slaves,' luxurious habits, recklessness, prodigality, womanly nerves, a pretty woman's dislikes, an artist's rapture. Thus born and bred, her corruption is natural. . . . She is perfect of her kind. Balzac delights to paint her only for the sake of his own picture. He dresses her, lays on for her her patches, arranges her garments, trembles before her dancing-girl's motions. He details her gestures with as much pleasure as if he were a waiting woman. His artistic curiosity is fed on the least trait of character and manners. After a violent scene he pauses at a spare moment, and shows her idle, stretched on her couch like a cat, yawning and basking in the sun. Like a physiologist, he knows that the nerves of the beast of prey are softened, and that it only ceases to bound in order to sleep. But what bounds! she dazzles, fascinates; she defends herself successively against three proved accusations, refutes evidence, alternately humiliates and glorifies herself, ralls, adores, demonstrates, changing a score of times her voice, her ideas, tricks, and all this in one quarter of an hour. . . . Danger roused and inspired her, and her excited nerves propel genius and courage to her brain. To complete the picture of this impetuous nature, superior and unstable, Balzac at the last moment makes her repent. To proportion her fortune to her vice, he leads her triumphantly through the ruin, death, or despair of twenty people, and shatters her in the supreme moment by a fall as terrible as her success."

No doubt Balzac's work is artistic in the highest sense; but his moral tendency, which I have mentioned before,

<sup>1</sup> See the author's translation of Taine's *History of English Literature*, ed. 1874, vol. iv. p. 290.

seems by no means involuntary. It has been, perhaps, too much the fashion of Englishmen to descant upon the immorality of French art, and too much the habit of Frenchmen to speak of the absence of moral aim from art as a virtue, and to boast of it as a specialty. Undoubtedly the conceptions of the two nations are very different on this subject, and the limits imposed upon art in England are narrower than they are in France. As I have already stated, the reason is to be found in the differences of race, climate, national characteristics and antecedents.

It is of course obvious that the limits of this book prevent us from giving a detailed analysis of every one of Balzac's novels, or discussing their merits or demerits in detail. But who can ever forget Victorien d'Esgrignon and his acquaintances, de Marsay, Maxime de Trailles, des Lupeaulx, Rastignac, Vandenesse, Adjuda-Pinto; the duchesses de Grandlieu, de Carigliano, de Chaulieu; the marquises d'Espard, d'Aiglemont, de Listomère; the Countess de Sérizy, Madame Firmiani, and many more, who appear again and again in his novels, who become realities to us, as they were to Balzac, with whose inner life and peculiarities we are perfectly acquainted? Who does not like to study the details of some episodes in the career of Talleyrand, Fouché, Siéyès, Carnot, Malin, the well-known spies Corentin and Peyrade, the rich banker Nucingen, with his German accent, du Tillet; and the doings of such journalists as Finot, Blondet, Nathan, Lousteau, de Rubempré, and many others? or to learn something of the lives of artists like Joseph Bridau, Schinner, de Somervieux, or of scoundrels like Philippe Bridau, drawn from the life as a painful likeness of an old *sabreur*, whose occupation as a man-killer being gone, seeks for amusement at any price. Our author's peasants are photographically delineated; his tradesmen are painfully minute; his doctors, his lawyers, his priests, stand out from the canvas; his mystics and idealists

are so truly described that they nearly send one to sleep, unless one is in the mood to study such abstruse characters: his fantastic heroes, such as Vautrin and Ferragus, and his "Association of the Thirteen," are so exaggerated and impossible that they amuse us by their very impossibility. In his descriptions of dwellings, such as the boarding-house of Madame Vauquer, the house of the *Chat qui palotte*; in his picture of rooms, their furniture and belongings; and even in the portraiture of the faces of his heroes and heroines, Balzac employs all the finished strokes of a miniature painter, and considers that his readers ought to feel the same interest in his sketches and personages that he himself has in them. He had also a strange belief in Mr. Shandy's theory that a man's name influences his character, and dwells on this subject repeatedly and lovingly.

An English critic<sup>1</sup> says of Balzac's novels:—

"The great majority of them, including the most powerful examples, may be described as variations on a single theme. Each of them is in fact the record of a martyrdom. There is always a virtuous hero or heroine who is tortured, and most frequently tortured to death, by a combination of selfish intrigues . . . indeed, in one way or other, as subordinate character or as heroine, this figure of a graceful feminine victim comes into nearly every novel. Virtuous heroes fare little better . . . the old-fashioned canons of poetical justice are inverted; and the villains are dismissed to live very happily ever afterwards, whilst the virtuous are slain outright, or sentenced to a death by slow torture . . . Balzac's best women give us the impression that they are courtesans acting the character of virgins, and showing admirable dramatic skill in the performance . . . the ladies who in his pages have broken loose from all social restraints, differ only in external circumstances from their more correct sisters."

<sup>1</sup> See in Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library*, an admirable essay on Balzac's novels.



There is a great deal of truth in these remarks, but the whole question seems to be whether Balzac describes society as it is, or rather as he imagined it to be. That he drew it as a pessimist cannot be doubted, but he was, as we have already said, a vivisector, and nothing but that. And as there are many writers who always look upon everything that goes on in this world with rose-coloured spectacles, and consider every man and woman as models of virtue and chastity, it may perhaps be as well if now and then an eminent novelist arises who paints life in less bright tints; and even if artistically this may not be so enchanting, still socially it may be true, and truth is better than art. Such works may not be fit for boarding-schools, but I imagine they will always be interesting to the student of certain phases—even if imaginary phases—of society. Another objection against Balzac, that he loved to describe horrors and sufferings, above all of women, seems to me not quite just. Our author describes and analyses whatever character, situation, or home he intends to bring before us, but shows no predilection for one part of his subject more than for another. His popularity in France will probably never be less than it is at the present moment; in England it will probably never be more.

### § 3. THE THEATRE UNDER LOUIS PHILIPPE.<sup>1</sup>

If the social life of France, as it existed in the third to the fifth decades of the nineteenth century, is portrayed for us by the fiction of the past generation, its social history, the records of its domestic and general progress, may be found revealed,

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is chiefly a *resumé* of Muret, *Histoire de France par le Théâtre*, vol. iii. *Règne de Louis Philippe*.

or at least illustrated, in the dramatic literature of the same period. During the great Revolution we have seen the drama playing a by no means unimportant part in the encouragement or the modification of popular passions; and in the epochs succeeding the restoration of monarchy we find the influence of the drama continually asserting itself—continually tending to fulfil its inalienable duty of instructing its audiences, and continually—it must be confessed—availing itself of a greater license and laxity in illustrating the manners of the age than its sister art of fiction. Nevertheless the dramatic art of the Restoration had in the first instance something better to do than to truckle to the less elevated instincts of the Parisian public. Its subjects were largely taken from the recent national history; and that, of course, because public opinion demanded and approved this historical complexion of the drama. The titles of a hundred plays, composed during the second quarter of the century, bear witness to the absorbing interest with which France was ever ready to contemplate herself as she was exhibited to the world during the memorable five-and-twenty years of Revolution and Empire. Not only self-contemplation, but to a large degree self-education, was the object of most of those who wrote, acted, or listened to such historical dramas as those which flourished in the days of M. J. Clément and his younger successors. Some of these I have mentioned in an earlier chapter. Others, yet more pronounced in their political tone and historical circumstance, followed upon the Revolution of 1830, of which I need only instance the remarkable *Charlotte Corday* of Rognier-Destoulbet, and *Camille Desmoulins* of Malhan and Blanchard. The French drama, in fact, threw itself with enthusiasm into the stream of liberal thought which burst its dykes in the Revolution of July, which flowed with increasing volume and comparatively insignificant checks during the first three or four years of the

reign of Louis Philippe, and which is as strongly reflected in the general literature of the period as any other epoch of French history.

The *Nouveautés* theatre, which occupied a site on the Place de la Bourse, was the first of the Parisian theatres which ventured to celebrate the second Revolution. July was past; and on the 2d of August, the very day on which Charles X. renounced the crown on behalf of himself and the dauphin, the *Nouveautés* produced a *Patriotic à-Propos*, the work of Villeneuve and Masson; which, representing as it did a scene of the 29th of July, was either a brilliant improvisation or an adaptation of materials already at hand. The stage was represented as filled with combatants surging backwards and forwards, or carried wounded from the streets; musketry deafened the audience between the speeches of the characters; the troops were satisfactorily routed by the victorious mob. The latter forces its way into the Tuileries, and a mason, Gâcheux,<sup>1</sup> takes his seat upon the throne. "Is it comfortable?" asks one of the populace. "Ah," replies the mason, "if you knew how one sinks into it. If a man does not stay here, when he is once in, he must be a ninny!" The allusions of the piece are of course numerous. Here is one in honour of the Polytechnic School, the students whereof had led the volunteer columns during the July-days:—<sup>2</sup>

"Let us do honour to that noble school  
Whence these high-minded boys have issued forth.  
The veterans of Fleurus and Arcole  
Could not have been more chivalrous than they.  
O hope of science, our deliverers,  
Where'er throughout the world ye speed your way

<sup>1</sup> *Gâcheux* is the French for a hodman, and *gâcheux* means splashy, muddy.

<sup>2</sup> One of these, Vanneau, killed in one of the conflicts, gave his name to a new street leading out of the Faubourg Saint-Germains—the Rue Vanneau—in which Balzac located the hôtel of his Valérie Marneffe.

‘Hats off! hats off!’ should be the grateful cry;  
 ‘All praise and honour to the sons of France!’<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

For years to come a play was barely acceptable to the populace unless one or more of its characters was dressed in the uniform of the Polytechnic School, or in that of the revived National Guard.

The affection with which Paris now began to cherish her most liberal traditions was displayed clearly enough through the stage. From the beginning of the century the city of revolutions had hardly been able to express any of the sympathy with which she looked back to the more patriotic of her sons who had earned fame and gratitude under the first Republic. Now, the *Marseillaise*, amongst other sacred relics of the past, renewed its sway over the imagination of the populace. With the middle classes it had rarely been a favourite; but to the people it was a hymn of liberty and of triumph. It was the new king himself who, from the balcony of his palace, in response to the vigorous summons of an excited crowd, honoured his subjects by repeating this significant symbol of their supremacy. The Revolution of July had, moreover, a song of its own, the *Parasitique*, composed by Casimir Delavigne, and set to music by Auber. It was adopted as a national air—for Delavigne was a special *protégé* of Louis Philippe; and Adolphe Nourrit sang it at the Opera in the uniform of a National Guard.

The *Patriotic à-Propos* was soon succeeded by a shoal of

<sup>1</sup> “Saluons cette illustre école.

Il en sont sortis nos enfants généreux.

Les vieux soldats de Fionus et d’Arcole

Ne pouvaient pas être plus braves qu’eux.

Voilà nos sauteurs, l’esprit de la science,

Partout où vous portez vos pas.

On doit crier : chapeaux bas ! chapeaux bas !

Honneur aux enfants de la France !”



similar plays, one of the most favoured being *The 27th, 28th, and 29th of July*, the joint work of Etienne Arago, then *directeur* of the Vaudeville, and Duvert. The conception of this piece is realistic enough, as the opening scene will testify. An Englishman, driving in Paris, is overtaken by the Revolution; his carriage is turned upside-down in the service of a hastily-improvised barricade; and taking the thing in good part, he throws himself into the fray, making common cause with the mob. The scene is based on an alleged incident of a sufficiently striking character. On the 29th of July 1830, whilst the streets were filled with an excited crowd, a patrol of eighteen soldiers, commanded by a lieutenant, was slowly forcing its way along the street Saint-Honoré, when an Englishman named Fox<sup>1</sup> fired upon them from a window of the Hôtel Royal, and thus shed the first blood of the Revolution. The patrol returned his fire, and killed both him and two of the servants of the hotel. In the mouth of the stage Englishman the authors of the piece put this stirring allusion to the sporting tastes of Charles X.—

“ Each hour that in the wood your monarch spends  
Is an hour wasted of your happiness.  
This prince has too much liking for the chase;  
But, as for me, I love not sporting kings.  
Their passion turns the human heart to stone.  
For see whereto this cold indifference  
In shedding blood conducts the monarch’s heart.  
If his first sport is the defenceless game,  
His last will be the people that he rules.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A nephew of Charles James Fox; or, as others say, an American named Feulkes. This appears to be only a tradition.

<sup>2</sup> ‘ Dans les bois tout le temps qu’il passe Est perdu pour votre bonheur. Ce prince, il aime trop la chasse; Je n’aime pas un roi chasseur, Cet exercice enduret trop le cœur.	Verser le sang avec indifférence, Vous voyez où cela conduit. C’est par le gibier qu’on com- mence, C’est par le peuple qu’on finit.”
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*The Gentleman in Waiting* was another well-favoured political play, full of allusions and reminiscences, which combined the democratic idea with the Napoleonic skillfully enough to meet with a very fair reception from its audiences. *Andre the Stucco*, by Fontan, who had been imprisoned under the former Government for a political newspaper article, *Le Mouton enragé*, had a considerable success during the same phase of the public taste: although it, in common with other works of the same author *Mait Jeanne* and the *Voyage of Liberty*, elevated personal caricature above the claims of dramatic art, and encouraged a taste for stage-lies which was, happily, not destined long to hold its own with the public. *The Men of Tomorrow*, *The Place market* (*La Foire aux Places*), *The Woman's League*, and *The Stagnated King*, a tragedy by Anquet,<sup>1</sup> were the most noted of the remaining plays which, in the year succeeding the Revolution of July, appealed to the uppermost dramatic predilections of the people.

Another phase of the public taste was appealed to in a number of plays directed against the priests and Jesuits. Some of these were simply reproductions from the repertory of the eighteenth century; others were new, like the *Contre-Lettre*, the *Jesuit*, and similar plays. Most of them were scandalous, in a higher or lower degree; some were even blasphemous, as indicated by such titles as *Napoleon in Paradise*, the *Sea of Men*, and the like. Few deserve that the names of their authors should be coupled with them. Napoleon himself came in for a fair share of the attention of the dramatists. Alexandre Dumas, to avenge a slight put upon him by Louis Philippe and his ministers, wrote a drama on the Emperor, the title-role of which was created by Frederic Lamaitre, then fast rising to the zenith of his fame. The play itself is not Dumas' best; and it is chiefly notable for

<sup>1</sup> 1794-1844.

the circumstances under which it was written, and for the somewhat ridiculous letter addressed by its author to the King.<sup>1</sup> Dumas, upon the recommendation of General Foy, had received an appointment as clerk in the secretary's office of the Duke of Orléans; but when his *Henry III.* had attracted upon him the attention of the Court, he was made joint-librarian of the Palais-Royal. It was this comfortable sinecure which he thus grandiloquently resigned.

*Napoleon* was not Alexandre Dumas' first dramatic manifestation. He was already a well-known figure on the Parisian stage when it was performed. We have seen Dumas at work as a novelist; we have analysed the perfect architecture of his romance, if such an expression is permissible; as a dramatist, Alexandre Dumas possessed this gift of invention even to a higher degree. "If Victor Hugo could build plays as well as I, and if I could write as noble verses as Victor Hugo, what splendid pieces we should write," he said, speaking of himself with that characteristic candour which readers are so amused at in his *Travelling Impressions*. An author usually

<sup>1</sup> The letter is curious. "February 11th, 1831. Sire—About three weeks ago I had the honour to ask your Majesty for another interview. I intended to offer my resignation by word of mouth; for I wished to explain to his Majesty how, in doing this, I was neither ungrateful nor capricious.

"Sire, it is long since I wrote and printed that, with me, the man of letters was but the preface of the man of politics.

"The age at which I shall be able to become one of the members of a reformed Chamber is approaching for me.

"I am almost certain, on the day when I attain the age of thirty, to be named deputy: I am twenty-eight, sire.

"Unfortunately the people, who see from below and afar, do not distinguish between the intentions of the king and the acts of ministers.

"Now the acts of the ministers are arbitrary and fatal to liberty.

"Amongst the men who live upon your Majesty, and who daily tell him that they admire and love him, there is perhaps not one who loves you more than I do; only they say it and do not think it, whilst I do not say it, and I think it.

"But, sire, devotion to principles is above devotion to men. Devotion to principles makes La Fayette; devotion to men makes Rovigos.

"I pray your Majesty to accept my resignation."

is not to be trusted as a self-critic ; but in this little piece of braggadocio he was not far from the truth. His plays were always constructed with a masterly knowledge of the requirements of the stage. One is born a poet, a musician, an artist ; one is also born a dramatist ; if Alexandre Dumas lacked the æsthetic refinement and moral elevation of a dramatist of the highest order, he was born a playwright, and as such he was the first of his time. He admirably understood the effects, the *fiocelles* as the French say, of dramatic performances ; he knew to a nicety what should and should not be said before the footlights ; he knew that a personage must not be too glib, under pain of hegetting displeasure on the part of the public ; that action is what seduces the majority of spectators, and that a play which has action and varied movement is always certain to please, whereas one of high merit with regard to psychological study and the depiction of character will produce but a faint impression unless the dish be spiced with those condiments which appeal to the more vulgar feelings of audiences. The result was that Dumas almost invariably pleased and succeeded on a first hearing, although he was afterwards more or less roughly treated at the hands of his journalistic critics. His plays were certainly more "romantic," in the sense that was then attached to that expression, than those of Victor Hugo ; nevertheless they met with no opposition worth mentioning, whilst Hugo's gave rise to downright battles between the sectarians of two schools of literature which vied for supremacy. Alexandre Dumas was veritably the spoilt child of the public. His first drama was *Christine* ; but it was performed several years after it had been written, and immediately after a play on the same subject by Frederic Soulié which had failed. He first appeared publicly as an author in *Henry III and his Court*, a piece composed in defiance of classical tenets and conventions. It was performed at the Théâtre Français in



1828, and secured such unprecedented success that Racine (it is the author himself who is again our informant) was hooted and consigned to the theatrical lumber-room. This success, when we consider that *Henri III.* was the weakest of Dumas' dramatic productions, could hardly be explained were it not borne in mind that the public was sick of the Greeks and Romans who continually expressed the same things in the same terms, in the same situations, and the same costumes. In *Henri III.* they emerged from the Racinian monotony into a new play which, however uncouth, contained local colouring, new situations, and new ideas. *Christine*, in verse, was performed two years later with equal success. In 1831 the Théâtre de la Porte St. Martin gave the play in which Alexandre Dumas may be said to have shown all his qualities and defects, *Antony*. The object of the play is in itself objectionable, and it is objectionably treated; but in point of interest and construction it is hardly equalled by any contemporary drama. *The Tower of Nesle* of which the paternity gave rise to a duel between Alexandre Dumas and M. Gaillardet, was another notable production of the same class. There is not much in *Kean*, *The Widow's Husband*, and *Angèle*, performed from 1832 to 1836, save the never-varying qualities of construction I have spoken of; but *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* and *A Marriage under Louis XIV.*, his last plays, are delightfully witty and lively comedies, which, to our taste, are the most valuable portion of Dumas' dramatic baggage. He ceased to write for the stage after 1841; and the theatre lost in him one of its most active and vivacious exponents. Although his art was far from high, it was, as Victor Hugo's in another sphere, the abstract expression of the theories which for ever altered the form and the spirit of French drama.

De Vigny brought also upon the stage, in 1829, a translation of Shakspeare's *Othello*, which met with but little success; his *Maréchale d'Ancre*, played two years later, was

also a failure, but *Chatterton*, performed in the beginning of 1835, took the town by storm, and was repeatedly performed.

Amongst the plays specially commemorating the most troubled period of the French Revolution, *Charlotte Corday*, which I have already mentioned, fell almost dead, whilst *Camille Desmoulins, or Parties in 1794*, had not much more success. The character-rôle was but an idealised Desmoulins; or, at all events, it took the Dantonist at his best, and shirked the passages of his life which tell most to his discredit. The part of Lucile, his wife, is more true to fact, and represents fairly well the interesting and unfortunate woman who did so much to soften the asperities of her eccentric husband. The Robespierre of this drama is a fine creation, though, I fear, little more historically accurate than Desmoulins. The following soliloquy is in its way admirable:—

"Let us look at this diplomatic message; they tell me it is important . . . so much the better; it will divert the stormy thoughts which trouble me. (*He breaks the seal and reads.*) Ah! from London! . . . The French princes! . . . They offer me gold! Do they not know that I despise it? They have no conception of that fine title of republican; they think that every man may be corrupted. . . . High rank! Am I not in the highest! But how much it costs me! . . . There's a conspiracy afoot, I am certain. . . . That Dillon! . . . Did Camille wish to reveal it! . . . It was the only way to save himself.

"I see it now. . . . I shall have no rest but in the tomb. . . . Rest! who knows of that! It may be calumny will insult my ashes. . . . O posterity! thou alone canst judge me. Yes, thou wilt say that my design was grand, for if I fail the Revolution will survive me. It will be accomplished. But what force must not one have there (*he lays his hand on his forehead*) to advance to the goal! For ever to oppose the manitous of the scaffold to the ever renewed furies of civil war! . . . The miserable ones! they envy my power. Ah! what am I! . . . a slave

of the country, a living martyr of the republic, the victim and the scourge of crime. It is enough to know me to be calumniated ; other men have their crimes forgiven ; in me they make my zeal for the country a crime. Rob me of my conscience, and I shall be the most miserable of men.

“ They call me tyrant ! . . . If I were, they would crawl at my feet ; I should choke them with gold, I should give them the right to commit every kind of crime, and they would be grateful ! If I were, the kings we have vanquished, far from denouncing me, would extend to me their dishonest support ; I should be treating with them. What do they look for in their distress, if it is not the succour of a faction protected by them, which sells to them the glory of our country ?

“ Day by day I say in the Convention, but in vain : ‘ If we lose hold of the reins of the Revolution, you will see a military despotism seize them, and the leader of the factions overthrow the despised national representatives.’

“ People, remember that if, in the republic, Justice does not rule with absolute sway, and if his word does not mean the love of equality and of country, liberty is an idle word ! People, thou that art feared, that art flattered, and despised, thou, an acknowledged sovereign, treated ever like a slave, remember that, wherever justice reigns not, the passions of magistrates do, and the people has changed its fetters, not its fate. O people ! know that every friend of liberty will always be placed between a duty and a calumny ; that those who cannot be accused of having betrayed will be accused of ambition ; that thy confidence and thy esteem will be titles to prescription for all thy friends ; that the cries of oppressed patriotism will be called cries of sedition ; and that, not daring to attack thee in the mass, they will proscribe individually all good citizens.”

Noble words ! but rather strange in the mouth of Robespierre. Another play, called *Robespierre*, took a more just view of the character of the Terrorist, assisted thereto by the concentration of the interest on his victims — on André Chenier, Roucher, and others of the guillotined. No sketch, however brief, of the theatre under Louis Philippe, could be

written without the mention of a comedy in which Frederick Lemaître made his most successful creation in the character of Robert Macaire. It was indeed in 1823, in the *Auberge des Adrets*, that this pleasant swindler first made his appearance. The piece was written as a melodrama, and the author had no idea of representing Macaire in a comic light; but Lemaître audaciously turned his rôle into a travesty, and produced the quaint cut-throat, dressed in ragged splendour, full of grotesque humour and dry philosophy, who has since become one of the best recognised types of the human species. So popular did the character of Robert Macaire become, that in 1834 a play was produced, which was named after the hero, now become a respectable financier—more after the style of 1877, one would think, than of 1834—married to the daughter of the Baron de Wormspire, whom the dutiful son-in-law cheats at cards as gracefully as he swindles the simple M. Gogo and his brother speculators. At the close of the piece Macaire's old enemies, the gendarmes, are on his track again; and he eludes both them and his victims by the very burlesque *dénouement* of a sudden ascent in a balloon; laughing over the side, in his assumption to the skies, as he had laughed in his sleeves while yet a dweller on *terra firma*.

*The Trial of a Marshal of France*, produced at the Nouveautés in 1831—a four-act historical piece, recalling one of the most stirring and painful events of 1815, the condemnation of Ney, but without any great merit—gave rise to considerable agitation amongst the public and was honoured by an interdiction from the Government. Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse*, the plot whereof we shall give further on, shared the same fate at the end of 1832; not, of course, without the most vigorous protests on the part of its author, and the most impatient disapproval of the public. The authorities, who had doubtless begun to experience the awkwardness of granting complete liberty of expression under a monarchy which



was only constitutional in name and as an experiment, had in fact begun to draw the reins tighter and tighter against the strong head of an impetuous nation. Casimir Delavigne's *Children of Edward*,<sup>1</sup> brought out with much success in May 1833, was too full of significant liberal allusions, and too eagerly understood and applauded by the public, to be tolerated by those who had suppressed the *Trial of a Marshal of France*; and it also fell under the ban of the Government. Here, as on other occasions, Louis-Philippe was far in advance of his advisers. He had committed himself, on the first night of the performance of the *Children of Edward*, by a warm letter of congratulation to the author. Delavigne replied in a dignified letter,—far more dignified than that of the king,—declining the compliments of a sovereign, as such, upon a play in which he had intended to cast discredit on the usurpation of national liberty and popular supremacy. “I think,” he said to the king, “and the public is of my opinion, that there is no reconciliation possible between the incontestable usurpation which I attack in my tragedy, and a revolution in which I pride myself in having taken part, which was made by the immense majority of Frenchmen, in the name of law.” It is altogether one of the most remarkable episodes of the rivalry of popular and monarchical sovereignty which history has to record. It was not long before the censure was definitely re-established, on September 9th, 1835. The minister who carried this measure into effect was M. Thiers; the last play suppressed before the passing of the Act was *Ango*, one of Félix Pyat's.<sup>2</sup> From this time forward the drama in France again languished, until the revolution of 1848 once more removed its fetters.

Amongst other dramatists who signalised themselves by their fervency in carrying out the new dictates of Romanticism in the drama, may be mentioned Frederic Soulié,

<sup>1</sup> Edward III. of England.

<sup>2</sup> 1810.

Bouchardy,<sup>1</sup> and Félix Pyat. Soulié wrote some plays of merit, but he was, on the whole, vastly inferior to most of those who furnished the stage during the eventful period which closed in 1848. Bouchardy, the author of *The Bell-ringer of St. Paul*, was a melodramatist of considerable invention, but his compositions were somewhat morbid, and too much flavoured with assize court horrors. He was a species of superior Xavier de Montepin. It should be mentioned here that just as the development of new literary theories had attained its zenith, a young man of Racinian genius successfully strove to cater favour for the classical tragedy of the seventeenth century by producing a play composed according to the old precepts. *Lucrèce* was performed at the Odéon in 1843, and the Parisian public, ever disposed to render justice to talent under whatever shape it shows itself, flocked to applaud Ponsard.<sup>2</sup> All the promises held out by *Lucrèce*, however, were not entirely fulfilled in subsequent plays; nevertheless Ponsard deserves to be mentioned as one of the distinguished contributors to the drama of his period, although, properly speaking, he was not in form and feeling a Romanticist.

I have reserved Victor Hugo's dramas for final examination, because all the other playwrights whose works I have noted in this chapter, not excepting Alexandre Dumas, were the satellites of this brilliant star. It was Victor Hugo who laid down the rules of the new school, and he maintained his title to be supreme leader of the brilliant host that followed in his wake. Victor Hugo expressed his dramatic views in the preface of his drama of *Cromwell* (which, by the by, was not intended to be performed; they were to the effect that the stage was, above all, a reflex of society, a mirror in which the public should see its image and the legitimate depiction of its vices and virtues. Tragedy, he contended, was only

<sup>1</sup> 1819, 1879.<sup>2</sup> 1814, 1867.

one of the three sides of the dramatic synthesis such as Shakspeare had magnificently illustrated it. The drama should comprise not only tragedy, that is the rendering of passion, but comedy, the delineation of character. It should be permissible to laugh as well as to cry on the stage, and the dramatist should not be tied down by conventionalists who had trammelled the great Corneille and clipped the wings of his genius. Shortly after, he attempted to carry out these wholesome principles in *Hernani*, the first of his dramas that was performed. The classical school fought hard against the play; but the partisans of Hugo, under the leadership of Theophile Gautier, fought harder, and success remained in their hands. After this came, in more or less rapid succession, *Marion de Lorme*, *Le Roi s'Amuse* (both in verse, as well as *Hernani*), *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Angelo*, and *Marie Tudor*, in prose; and finally *Les Burgraves* and *Ruy Blas* (verse). This last drama was so sharply criticised by the press that Victor Hugo resolved to give up stage writing. Some pretend that it would have been better for his glory if he had done this before; but the majority have wisely thought otherwise.

*Cromwell* was written in 1827, when Victor Hugo was barely twenty-five years old. It extends over nearly six hundred pages, and is far from having the symmetry, the æsthetic perfection of a masterpiece; the very fact that its extent prevents its performance summarily decrees its imperfection; but it contains numerous fine verses, a goodly number of highly dramatic situations, and a not wholly indefensible description of Cromwell's character. I do not think, besides, that Victor Hugo intended the first dramatic instalment to be more than a rough exposition of the main characteristics of the romantic drama. *Hernani* is a great improvement on *Cromwell*; it has remained one of the popular plays of the Théâtre-Français. However, in spite of the magnificent monologue of Charles V., the rich and resonant verses, and

the vigorous treatment of the subject, *Hernani* is comparatively inferior. Perhaps that one of our poet's dramas which may be said to have approximated most nearly to perfection is *Marion de Lorme*, albeit that the predominating idea of this play has been declared repulsive. With this I cannot agree. Victor Hugo chooses for a heroine a creature who, although fair in body, is corrupt of soul; but does this with the purpose of showing that she can be purified by a healthy and vigorous passion. Marion is in a certain sphere what Quasimodo, the hunchback of Notre-Dame, is in another. Of course the acceptance of so delicate a thesis by the public depends very much upon the manner in which it is treated. The poet surmounts the difficulty with great skill. The character of Marion, so difficult to render, and above all to make appear interesting and sympathetic, is traced with a wonderful delicacy of touch and a great depth of feeling. The construction of the play offers none of those unworthy tricks which are not unreasonably complained of in Victor Hugo, and which consist chiefly in entering by windows when the door may be safely used, or concealing people in cupboards when they cannot be got rid of in a more feasible way. Next in order of merit may be mentioned *Le Roi s'Amuse*. This play was peculiarly unfortunate. Ill received on the first night of its performance, it was prohibited on the second by the Government. The reason of this official severity was a poor one; it was said that two verses uttered by Triloulet, the strange figure which forms the centre of the drama, alluded to the *bourgeois* king. Nothing could have been more untrue. As to the hostility of the audience, it was more difficult to account for, since *Maria Tudor* and *Lucretia Borgia*, vastly inferior to *Le Roi s'Amuse*, enjoyed a fair run of success. In the latter play we find the poet again striving to expound a philosophic idea. Triloulet, the jester, is despised by his fellow-men on account of his deformities; urged by malice



and revenge, he incites King Francis the First to commit evil. But the jester has a daughter ; and he is himself the sufferer of the wickedness which by a piece of retributive justice, he has counselled his master to do. Francis seduces his child, and then when Triboulet hires a ruffian to murder the ravisher, it is his daughter who, by a fatal mistake, falls in the ambush prepared for the guilty one. Curiously enough, although it is remarkable for great lyric beauties, and contains situations as dramatic as they are natural, the public has never had an opportunity of reversing the judgment passed upon this drama.

Of the other dramas of Victor Hugo, *Ruy Blas* and *Les Burgraves*, although below *Marion de Lorme* and *Le Roi s'Amuse*, are amongst the most heart-stirring creations of the modern stage. In Victor Hugo the dramatist is not spotless ; far from it. But of all playwrights of his time he is the one who soared the highest ; and if the lyric poet transcends the dramatist, the latter's productions nevertheless deserve to be classed amongst those of master minds.

#### § 4. THE EPILOGUE.

We have reached the end of our survey of French Literature, which cannot on the present occasion be extended beyond the reign of Louis Philippe. It is true that here, within thirty years of our own time, we seem to stand face to face with a new group of causes, motives, and principles, out of which a whole harvest of literary fertility was already springing, from which a distinct literary epoch had already taken its rise. The literary history of France in the nineteenth century is a history of intellectual hardihood on the one hand, and of moderation and repression on the other : of

resolute assertion and re-assertion, opposed step by step by an equally resolute attempt to bridle the free expression of thought. The outburst of license in 1830, and the re-imposition of the censure in 1835, are typical events which have been many times repeated during the past hundred years; and the history of these alternate victories, which we leave for the present incomplete, would constitute in itself, perhaps, the most engrossing chapter of literary annals which it is possible to conceive. But, if we must relinquish our survey with this sense of its necessary incompleteness, it is well that we should recall for a moment the principal characteristics and features of the national genius whose productions we have passed under review, and note, whilst the impressions of these productions are still fresh upon the mind, the strength and persistency of the causes which have made French literature what it is. The political and social seeds of action which bore their first fruit in the first Revolution, whose vitality was not exhausted even in the fourth Revolution, and which have given to the written works of the nineteenth century a peculiar flavour and piquancy of their own, were not directly amongst the sources of the national genius which were prominent in our minds when we were considering the works of Villon, of Rabelais, of Corneille, of Molière. But, on the other hand, these sources were in themselves permanent; they had their share in producing a Guizot and a Balzac, as well as a Rabelais and a Molière; and it is to them that we must attribute the endurance of national types which makes the literature of to-day organically identical with the literature of the sixteenth century.

We have, it appears to me, had reason to conclude that the necessary interdependence and inevitable connection between the literature and the history of a country<sup>1</sup> is at

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, p. 4.

least as strikingly illustrated in the annals of France as in those of any other country; much more strikingly, for instance, than in the case of England. I do not think it could be maintained that the rich ideality and illimitable variety of English literature—of Shakspeare, of Byron, of Swinburne—is so thoroughly reflected and reproduced in the national character, and in the political history, as are the *verve*, elasticity, inconsistency, and love of social equality, which are conspicuous features of men like Rabelais, Voltaire, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, in the character and history of Frenchmen. Nor are the instances so many, or, as a rule, so important in England as in France, in which the mutual reaction of deeds and written words has been so direct and immediate. Probably no country except France could point to such a portentous outcome of the genius of her literary men as the Revolution of 1789, which has thoroughly transformed the national history of France, and which was undoubtedly prepared, predicted, and guided by the pens of a few individuals. And as to the manner of this influence of French literature over French history, has it not been practically the same in every age? Satire has been its prominent feature and its most powerful instrument; the mind of the people has been as acute to comprehend as the mind of the writer has been ready to insinuate all the subtle allusions, the mordant words and phrases, the delicate innuendos and implications which pierce like polished shafts through the outer skin of equable indifference in which a Frenchman is often clothed. Who did more than Rabelais to break down the hypocritical autocracy of ecclesiasticism? Who did more than Molière to disperse the mists of affectation in which the intellect and sense of his countrymen were gradually becoming involved? Who did more than Voltaire to destroy the last strongholds of a corrupt superstition? And was not satire the strongest weapon in the hands of

every one of them? How many other pioneers of civilisation and free thought do we not owe to France, that country to which can justly be applied the line—"Blessed are those among nations who dare to be free for the rest."<sup>1</sup> I might indefinitely multiply instances of the intimate relations existing between French literature and French history; but our survey has been inefficient indeed, our labour has been in vain, and our task is still unperformed, if it has not impressed this truth upon our minds.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *A Christ Lady*.





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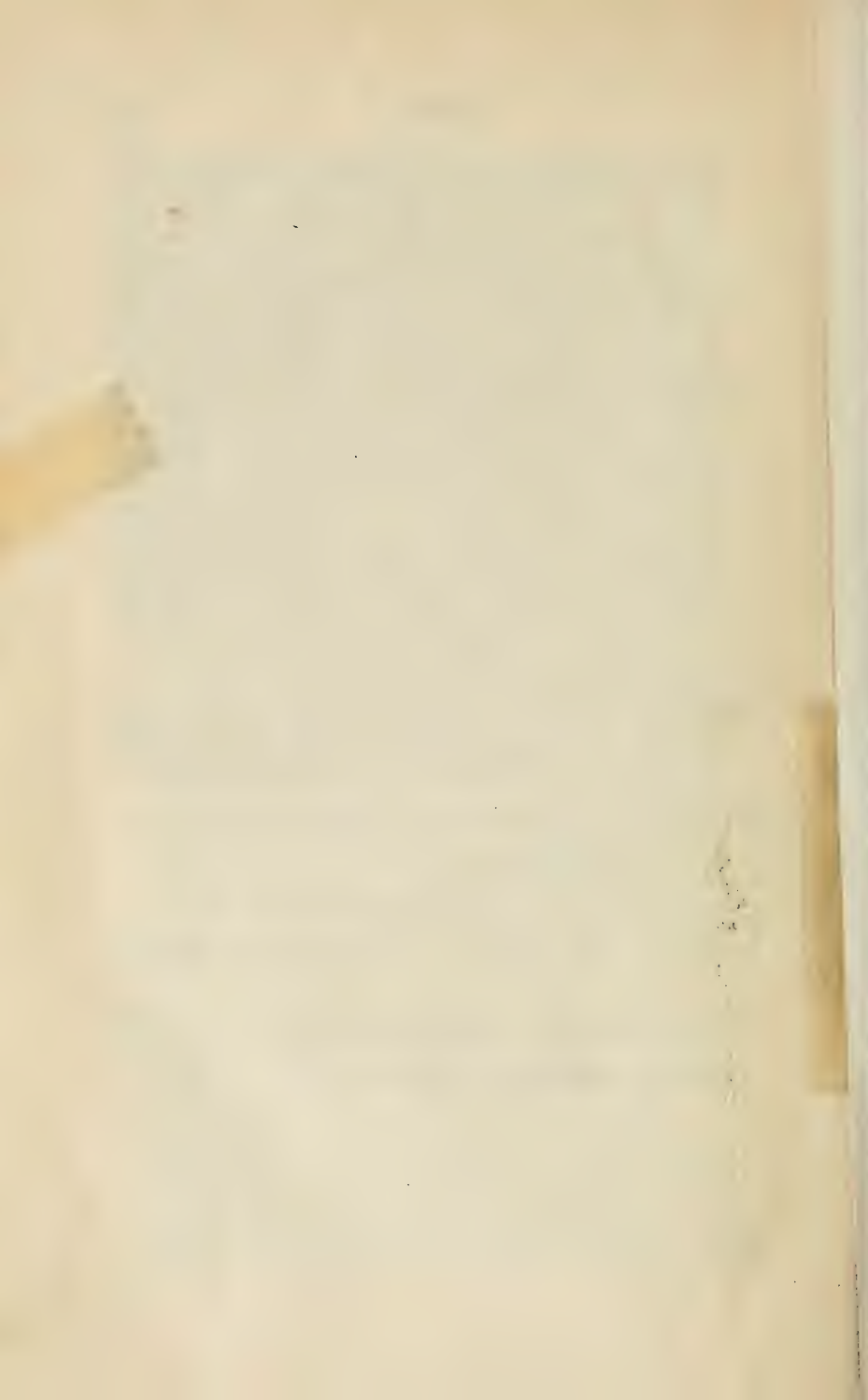
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